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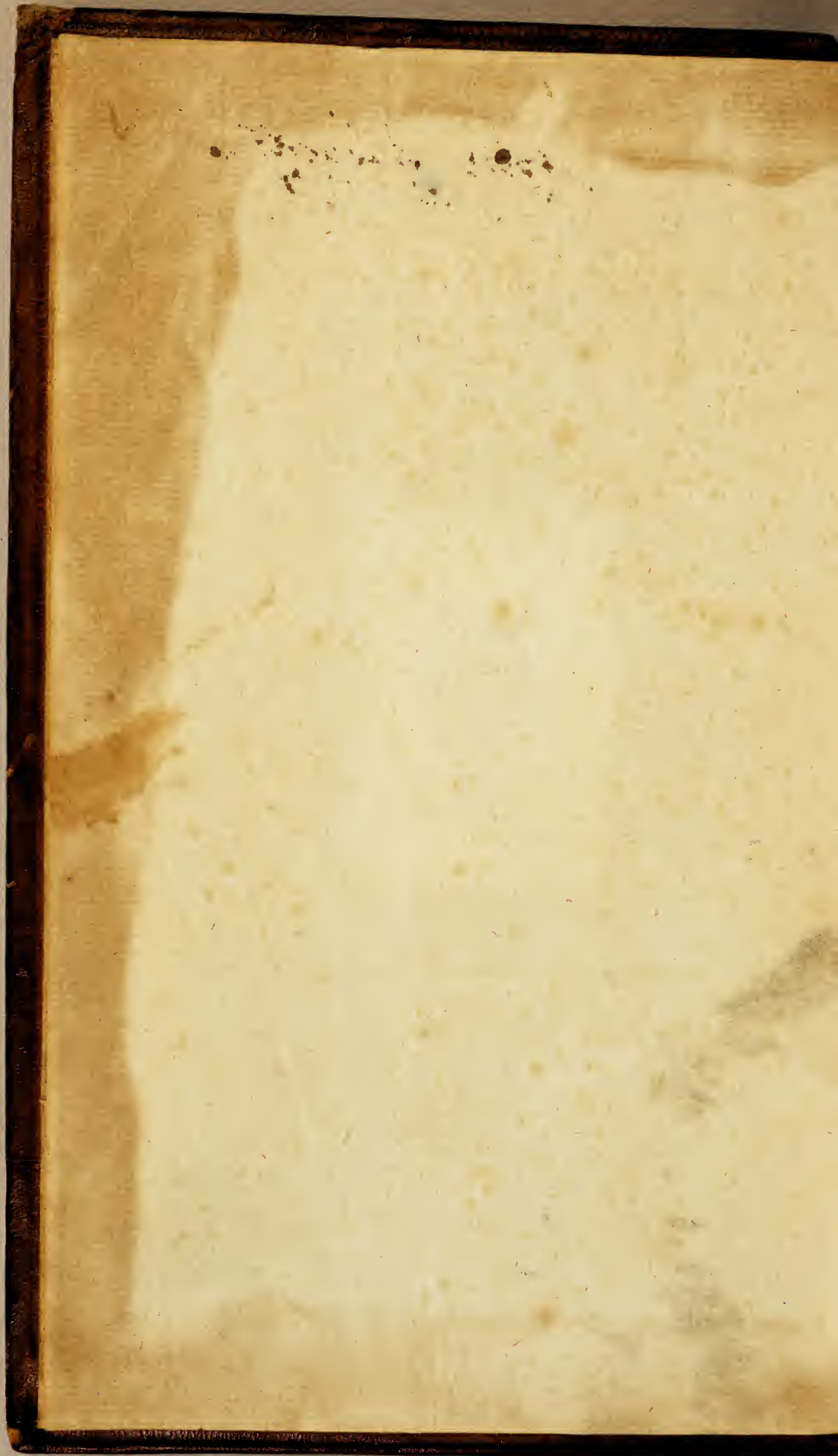
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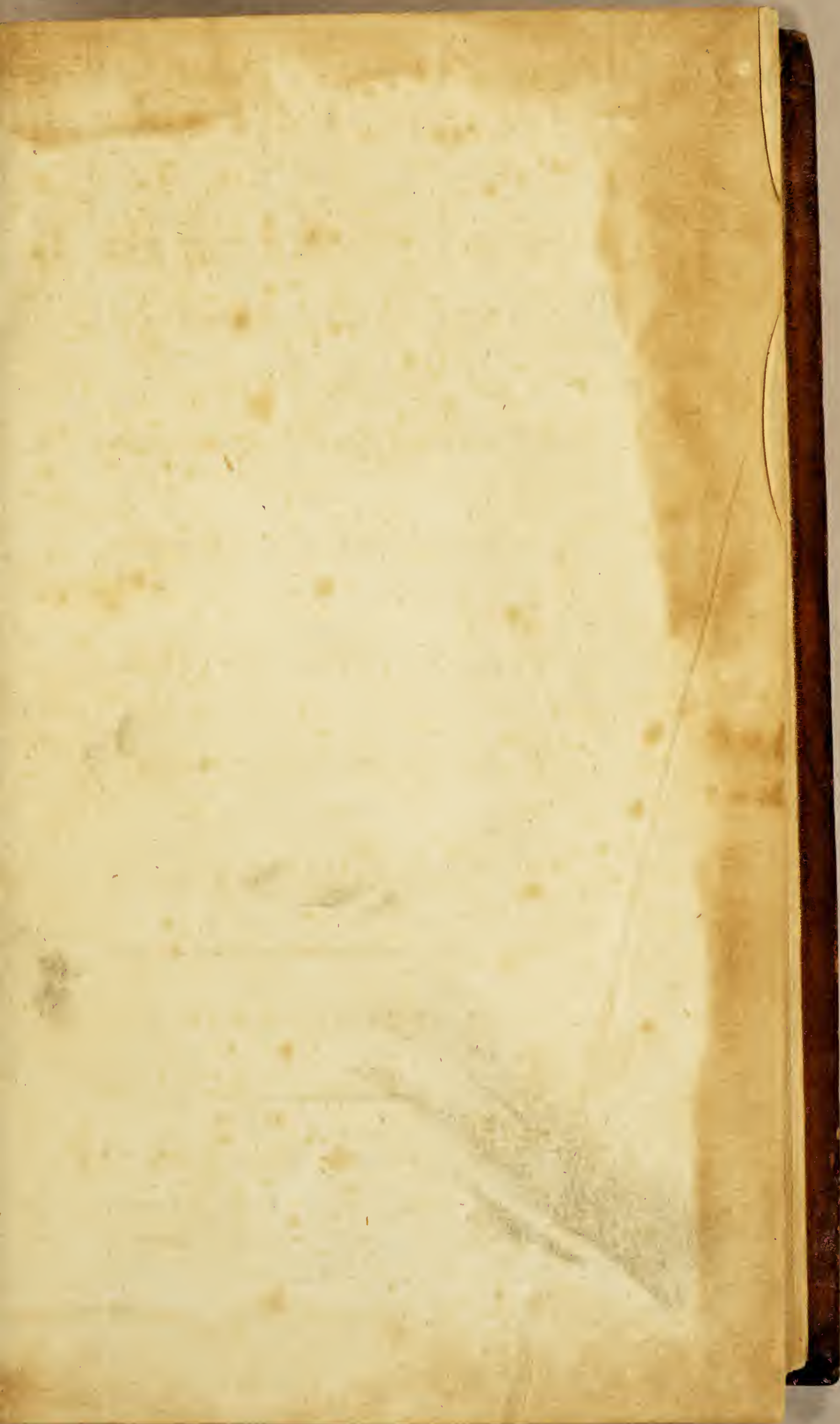


Chas. Savells











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By Arthur G. ...

See L.C. card -



# LETTERS

OF

CERTAIN JEWS

TO MONSIEUR *VOLTAIRE*.

CONTAINING

AN APOLOGY FOR THEIR OWN PEOPLE,

AND

FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT;

WITH

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

AND

A SHORT COMMENTARY EXTRACTED

FROM A GREATER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TRANSLATED BY THE REV. PHILIP LEFANU, D. D.

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PHILADELPHIA:

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THE  
TRANSLATOR  
TO THE  
READER.

THE translator of the following letters, thinks them worthy of publick attention. Mr. de Voltaire has cast many cruel and ill-grounded aspersions on the Jewish nation and religion, which are here examined and answered. However, the real purpose of this attack seems to be the same of the deists, to undermine the christian religion, by destroying the authority of the Old Testament on which it is founded. And to this end he has collected all the antiquated objections of Collins, Tindal, &c. and dressed them up anew for the very same purpose for which they were first proposed. Indeed Mr. de Voltaire seldom adds any thing from his own fund, and when he does, we have no reason to admire his learning or accuracy.

But, abstracted from these considerations, this work may be very useful to those who read the scripture. Many difficult parts of it are here explained, and many deistical objections answered in a manner entirely new. Instances might be given in the affair of the golden calf, Jephtha's vow, and in several passages of the prophets, which will afford pleasure and satisfaction to all impartial enquirers. There are many curious observations on the Jewish laws, and the comparison that is instituted between them and the laws of modern nations, will contribute to give us an higher opinion of the Mosaick code than is generally entertained. There are also several interesting particulars concerning the modern Jews to be found here, which are not generally known by us christians.

The reader must not lay too great stress on the encomiums, which are given to Mr. de Voltaire thro' this work. Some of them are ironical, and others are inserted in order to keep up that spirit of polite disputation, which the authors generally adhere to. As a poet and an historian, Mr. de Voltaire has met with merited applause; but he is very far from being equally well qualified for the office of a critick on the sacred writings.



# ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME years ago, a book was published, under the title of Jewish letters, of which Christians had reason to complain. As none of the sons of Jacob owned them, as none of them were convicted of having wrote them, this is a proof that those seeming Jews were feigned characters, and that the whole correspondence was imaginary. Which of us would be so imprudent as to inveigh against those who tolerate us, and to turn their ceremonies, their opinions and customs into ridicule ? No such thing will be found in this collection.

The chief purpose of this work is to justify our nation, which is arraigned by a celebrated writer, to make him sensible of some mistakes, that have escaped him in speaking of our sacred writings ; and to engage him to correct them in his new edition. This work ought not to give offence to christians. On the contrary, we think that many of them may learn with pleasure some interesting particulars of a people on whom they cannot look with indifference, as they are the depositories of those divine oracles on which the christian faith is built.

Whilst this collection was in the press, two excellent books have appeared. In one of them our sacred writings are vindicated against *the Philosophy of History*. In the other the principle articles of *the Philosophical Dictionary* are answered. We think the author who is attacked in this work, cannot excuse himself from answering, because his silence would be an acknowledgment of his defeat. These two works are not of such a nature as to be confuted by raillery. Had they appeared sooner, we would have left our illustrious writer in the hands of those two learned christians, who are far superior to us in such matters.

In vain have we called on Mr. de Voltaire, to enter the lists with those champions who are so worthy of him. He has thought it more prudent to descend to less formidable adversaries. He has answered the authors of this collection, and has done it with that air of superiority which wealth and talents inspire.

The dislike and contempt which he has shewn to this collection, have not however stopped the quick sale of it. Two editions of three thousand copies have been carried off at *Laurence Prault's*, besides a counterfeit edition at Liege, and an impression of some of these letters separately.

This then is at least the third edition which we lay before the publick, of a rude, impudent work, which can please none but criticks without taste, and must be despised by persons of a learned, liberal cast. This is the sentence which Mr. de Voltaire has pronounced. He is a competent judge, but however a party in the cause. And in consequence of this, his opinion has met with some contradiction.

This collection seems to have pleased the public, and most of the periodical writers have spoke favourably of it. As soon as it came out, the late Mr. Bounamy hastened to give an account of it in the *Journal of Verdun*, and he has done it in terms very flattering to the authors. He calls them *learned and polite Jews*, and their



work a learned and excellent collection of Letters. In the mean time, says this author, whilst we are preparing an abstract of this work, we cannot be too pressing in recommending the reading of it.

The author of *l'Année littéraire*, speaks no less favourably of it. These letters, says he, have been really written by Jews, with intent to justify their nation, which has been arraigned by Mr. Voltaire, and to point out many of his errors, in speaking of the sacred writings.

This author gives an abstract and thus concludes; These letters are worth reading. They discover industry, erudition and sense. We cannot be too earnest in requesting the authors to continue their comments on one part of the writings of Mr. de Voltaire. These may be joined to that comment which is preparing, and almost ready, on the other part of his writings. In this latter are pointed out all the errors, false quotations, and false dates, with which he has stuffed that story-book which he has given us for an history. Here too the other learned productions of this great man are not forgotten.

The judgment passed on these letters in the *Journal des Sçavans* is still more honourable to the authors of them. They give in it an excellent abstract of the work, which concludes in these words. If all polemick works were written in the style of this, they would do more honour to their authors, and would be better received by the publick. The different subjects then treated by our Jews, in their letters, are considered, and new strength is giving to their reasonings, by the clearness and precision with which they are presented. They conclude, saying, We could wish to lay before the reader the greatest part of the other subjects which are treated by our authors, and to shew with what energy, solidity and evidence, they bring to light the errors, mistakes, variations, and contradictions of their adversary. The miscellaneous observations at the end of the work, are announced as if they were the abstracts of a larger commentary. Do the authors signify by this their intention of publishing more extensive treatises? In this case we exhort them still to keep up the tone of politeness and civility that prevails thro' their present work, which is written besides in an ingenious and interesting manner. The slandered Jews may justly repel an injury, to which even the name of him who is said to have given it adds weight. It is well known how contagious the failings, errors, and mistakes of great men are, except they lose their consequence by their singularity or too great number. This last stroke is full of energy, it says more than our two volumes.

We could still quote a great number of other periodical writers, both French and others, who have given nearly the same opinion of our authors and their letters. But these accounts, altho' they might be entertaining and useful, would become tedious. We shall beg the reader's permission however, to add to them the opinion of those learned Englishmen, the authors of the *Monthly Review*. The letters now before us are written with much more decency, politeness and temper, than are generally to be met with in controversial writings. They likewise shew the authors to be men of learning and good sense. They treat Voltaire with great respect, but point out many mistakes, inconsistencies, contradictions and misrepresen-



tations in what he has advanced concerning the Jews, and the writings of the Old Testament. In a word, the Hebrew gentlemen defend themselves with great ability, and discuss several points relating to sacred history with much erudition and judgment.

Our intention in mentioning those testimonies, so honourable to our authors, is neither to recommend their work, nor to flatter their vanity. Their pride is raised by no encomiums, but by those which are addressed to their politeness and moderation. They look upon the others as incitements generously given to strangers, who endeavour to write in a language which is not their own, upon interesting subjects, and against an adversary so much superior to them, and for every reason, so formidable.

We do not intend neither by these encomiums, to administer consolation to them for the very different manner in which Mr. de Voltaire has spoke of them. In the opinion of this learned and deep writer, our authors are ignorant, hot-headed blockheads. Thus he treats them in his highest toleration, while he declares, that as he may have been mistaken in many things, thro' want of time or information, he will with pleasure retract those errors into which he may have fallen, and that he thanks those who will point them out to him, even although their zeal should savour of sharpness. Our authors, whose zeal has no sharpness, generously forgive Mr. de Voltaire those little bitter strokes, which are indeed less violent than his vehement attacks upon so many men of letters. They well know how impatiently this great man bears contradiction, even when his fiery and impetuous imagination hurries him beyond those limits which, in calmer hours, he would respect.

But it was proper to shew that our authors are not the only persons who perceive want of just inference, contradictions, errors, and falsehoods in the writings of this great man, and that many others see as much of these things as they do, and some more. It was proper to make learned foreigners sensible, whom we have known to lament over the whims of French beaux-esprits, that the seduction of philosophizing has not yet so far spread over the nation, but that there is yet a considerable number of the learned, who deem it honourable to hold different opinions, and also to tell their minds freely. And notwithstanding the endeavours of certain writers, to raise Mr. de Voltaire to the rank of monarch of literature, there are still some judges who dare approve those writings which reprove his errors, whilst they pay a proper respect to his talents.

Let us say a word of the additions made to this new edition. In the first place, six new letters are taken up in defence of the legislation of Moses. It is obvious that this subject alone would have afforded matter for a more extensive work, and perhaps some of our authors would have attempted it. But they are informed that the celebrated Mr. Michaelis is preparing to publish his *Droit Mosaique*. The publick will certainly find in the work of so learned a man the justest notions, and the most extensive information with regard to our whole legislation,



## ADVERTISEMENT.

What Mr. de Voltaire says concerning toleration among the Jews, is discussed here more particularly! We shew that the facts he quotes from our history are either foreign to the question, or falsely represented, or that they happened in times of anarchy, captivity, general corruption, &c. That most of the instances he produces, prove nothing, or make against himself. That the Jewish legislation was of necessity intolerant, but not the only intolerant one, and that this severity was better conducted amongst them, than amongst other nations. On this occasion many instances of want of toleration among the ancients are produced, especially among the Greeks and Romans. More examples yet might have been quoted, especially in reasoning against Mr. de Voltaire, for example, Abraham persecuted for the sake of religion by Nemrod; Zoroaster waging war against the king of Touran, in order to make him conform to the worship of fire; the oath which every citizen of Athens took to defend his religion, and to conform to it without reserve; Eschilus condemned and led to execution, for having spoken ill of the Gods; the Epicurean philosophers banished from two cities, because they corrupted the morals of the citizens by their maxims and examples; the works of Cremutius Cordus burned by order of the senate, which last fact, added to the others that our authors have produced, proves incontestably the falsehood of Mr. de Voltaire's assertion, that *there is no instance in history of a philosopher's having opposed the will of the prince and of the government*. The author's are sensible that many instances of toleration may be produced against them, but they know that it is easy to answer them, especially in opposition to Mr. de Voltaire, and they cannot conceive that so great a writer, defending so favourite a cause, could stake his credit on such weak arguments, whilst much better ones were at hand.

*The short Commentary* contains many new extracts. Some of them relate to Abraham, and to the origin of circumcision. Our authors had omitted in the former edition to avoid repetition, and because the two learned Christians, above spoken of, had treated this subject. But as it was represented to them, that these subjects were particularly interesting to the Jewish nation, whose members seldom read Christian books, they thought proper to publish these extracts, after revising and enlarging them. Where they have gleaned after the two learned Christians, they have thought it their duty to confess it and to give honour where honour was due.

The whole work concludes by the examination of an article taken out of the *Questions sur l'Encyclopedie*, in which Mr. de Voltaire returns again to the story of the golden calf, and strives to make defence by the art of chymistry, and that of casting metals. If he finds the tone of our authors a little more animated in the reply, he must excuse it. He first taught them this tone. However, he may see in the last pages, that tho' our authors are under the necessity of criticising, they have taste enough to give due praise.



10

E P I S T L E

D E D I C A T O R Y,

O R

L E T T E R

From the EDITORS to

Mr. D E V O L T A I R E.

S I R,

**A**T length the wishes of the public and our own are soon to be gratified! You are giving a new edition of your works. As it is to be published under your own eyes and with your own corrections, it will be authentic and complete. All the real productions of the greatest genius of this age will be found there collected, and it will be easy hereafter to distinguish them from that heap of spurious productions which are impudently ascribed to you, those unhappy births,



laid to your charge by envy, or condemned by their own parent, as unworthy of bearing his name!

You are raising a lasting monument to your own glory and for the instruction of posterity: You will not leave any thing in it that may tarnish the former, or mislead the latter: Therefore you are still reviewing those immortal works and probably now putting the last hand to them!

Could we wish for a more favourable opportunity of presenting you this collection which we have made up out of some tracts that concern us? These are *Letters, Reflections, a Comment, &c.* of some of our brethren, Portuguese and Germans, on various parts of your writings: Be pleased, sir, to receive and peruse them. As you are now employed in your new edition, which is announced, it may be profitable and pleasing to you to read over those sheets. For altho' the mistakes and errors, the contradictions, and bad reasoning, the falsehoods and scandalous imputations in your remarks on the history of the Jews and their sacred writings, are pointed out, yet the praises given far outweigh the deserved censures.

These Jews are not bold aggressors, who brave your resentment, and wantonly attack you: They are members of a nation which you have often outrageously abused, and which you cease not to persecute with an animosity unaccountable: (1) They confine themselves to a reply which you have rendered necessary: They repel your darts, but they revere the hand which throws them: They are passionate lovers of your works, and could wish to find in every part of them that exactness and high perfection which you are able to give them, and they think you may be obliged to them for pointing out to you those parts which seem to fall short of this Character.

In this spirit they have wrote these observations,

(1) And yet it seems easy to account for it! *Christ.*



and with these motives only, we have collected them and presented them to you.

We remain with the highest esteem and veneration,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble servants,

Paris, the—

JOSEPH LOPEZ,  
ISAAC MONTENERO,  
BENJAMIN GROOT,

Jews in the environs of Utrecht.

P. S. We could not obtain a permission to publish this collection, but upon condition of admitting a Christian to make such notes as he thought fit on it. We consented to this, without adopting or answering for these notes. We shall carefully distinguish our notes and those of our authors from the Christian's, by these abbreviations, *Christ. Aut. Edit.*



## L E T T E R S

O F C E R T A I N

## P O R T U G U E Z E J E W S,

W I T H

CRITICAL REFLEXIONS on the 1st Chapter of  
the 7th Volume (1) of the WORKS of Mr. de VOL-  
TAIRE; with respect to the JEWS.

## L E T T E R I.

From Mr. GUASCO to Mr. SWEETMIND.

*The Occasion and Subject of the following Letters.*

**Y**OU desire to know fir, what has given birth  
to the following letters and reflections: It is pro-  
per to satisfy you.

Worldly interest often divides those whom the ties  
of blood, religion, and common misfortunes should  
unite. About eight or ten years ago a dispute arose  
between the Portugueze Jews of Bourdeaux, and  
some of their brethren of other nations. These last  
pretending to form but one body with the others,  
claimed upon that account those privileges which  
the first had enjoyed in this city for more than two  
centuries.

(1) 7th Vol. It is the 5th of the edition of Geneva, in 1756. Edit.



In these circumstances the Portuguese Jews applied to the author (1), and requested he would join his good offices to those of their (2) agent at *Paris*: He served them with affection; and wrote to the Marshal Duc d'R. from whom he received an answer as flattering to himself as it was satisfactory to the Portuguese nation (3).

This was not the only obligation the Portuguese had to the author. This dispute gave occasion to reflect on the disadvantageous and cruel prejudices which are entertained against the Jewish nation in general, and on the common want of information in France concerning this point, that a distinction should be made between the Jews of Spain and Portugal, and those of other nations. It was therefore thought necessary to write a short apology for the Jews in general, and to show the difference between these two bodies of men. This task was given to the author, and he undertook it.

Mr. de Voltaire's chapter against the Jews seemed to be the strongest thing to their disadvantage. The weight of authority which this illustrious writer gives to his prejudices, was almost sufficient to (4) crush this people entirely, by supplying calumny, in course of time, with weapons. As we are persuaded that this never was nor could be his intention, and that he would even rejoice to see those evils prevented which he had not foreseen or attended to, our author has resolved to combat these imputations. You are sensible with how much circumspection he has done it, and with what success.

(1) The author of *Reflexions Critiques*, is Mr. Pinto, a Portuguese Jew, much esteemed for his politeness and genius. He has wrote an Essay on Luxury, published at Yverton in 1764. *Edit.*

(2) This agent is Mr. *Pereire*, well known for the art of teaching persons to speak, who were deaf from their birth. *Edit.*

(3) Under this common name are included the Portuguese and Spanish Jews. They are settled in France since the Year 1550, and enjoy the same privileges as the King's other subjects by virtue of Letters Patent, which have been renewed every Reign. *Aut.*

(4) Are they serious in their fears that the writings of Mr. de Voltaire will crush the Jewish nation entirely? Could empty declamation accomplish that which so many ages of oppression never could effect? *Edit.*



This, Sir, was the occasion and the subject of those letters, &c. which you wish to read over again. These preliminary informations will be useful, as you think, in casting light on the *Reflexions Critiques*. It will be easier understood why, in an apology for the Jewish nation, the Portugeze and Spanish Jews are so much exalted above those of Germany and Poland.

We heartily wish that every Christian would read this work with those sentiments of moderation and impartiality which you possess. They may then perhaps adopt less unfavourable notions of the Jews; or if they condemn us, they will do it without hating us. Let pretended philosophers go on harangueing, let them insult and calumniate an unhappy people under the marks of benevolence and toleration, but a Christian should know neither passion nor hatred.

We remain respectfully, &c,



## (1) L E T T E R II.

*From the Author of the Critical Reflections to Mr. PE-  
REIRE, Agent to the Portugueze nation at Bour-  
deaux, when he sent him these Reflexions.*

S I R,

**T**HE letter which I wrote by your directions to Marshal R. in favour of the Portugueze nation established at Bourdeaux, has procured me from you such thanks and encomiums as I should scarcely have deserved, if I had acquitted myself of every thing which you and that nation could justly expect from my zeal for their interests. These interests should be dear to me for more reasons than one, first on account of our common descent, our ancestors having lived for many centuries in Spain and Portugal, than on account of those feelings which tie us to our ancient country, and to that ancient religion (2), the parent of all others, which is most universally and unjustly vilified by those who ought to treat it with respect and veneration. The signal services which I have been so happy as to do to the Portugueze nation settled at Amsterdam, of which I hope they will long reap the advantages, are but an additional incitement urging me to give to my brethren in other places those proofs of good will which they have a right to expect from me: But I am sorry that you have employed me on two occasions, in which the interests of the Portugueze nation clash, as it were, with those of the Jews of other nations: I am sensibly affected by this, and I perceive the same feelings in you, although reason and sound policy authorize your conduct. Caligula wished that the Roman

(1) This letter and the following reflexions were printed at Amsterdam in 1762. *Edit.*

(2) Those Christians who look upon the present Jewish worship as superstitious and vain, yet sincerely respect the ancient Jewish religion, the parent of their's: None among them despise it except Atheists and Deists. *Christ.*



people had but one head, that he might have the barbarous pleasure of cutting it off at one stroke: Why did he not convert the wish, in order that the happiness of one individual might become that of the community! This, if it was possible, would be our wish. The happiness we acquire at the expence of others is but a gilded misfortune: It is a poison which can cure none except the sick; but unfortunately in politics, as well as in physick, we are often obliged to apply to empiricks. Since men have been divided into many distinct communities, it seems to be a peculiar misfortune that the interests of these several societies must necessarily clash. It is therefore incumbent on us to vindicate the rights of the Portugeze, although this should be prejudicial to the Germans, or the Jews of Avignon, at the same time you and I wish by the most important services, to make these latter forget those little heart-burnings which the lawful and necessary defence of the privileges of the Portugeze may have compelled us to give them, whilst we were shewing the distinction between them and us.

I send you, sir, my *Reflections* on what Mr. de Voltaire has wrote against the Jews. You will find some among them which would require to be placed in a fuller light. But as it is not my intention to attack Mr. de Voltaire, I think it sufficient to present that illustrious writer some new materials, which no man can make a better use of than himself, and which his love of truth will, I doubt not, induce him to use in his new (1) edition. You know, sir, that I am his greatest admirer: I could not (2) forgive myself if there was any man in Europe who had read and studied his works oftener than myself; I look upon them as an universal (3) library: And I this day

(1) *This new edition* is preparing. Mr. de Voltaire has now a fine opportunity of fulfilling his engagements, and of shewing his regard for that truth which he loves. Edit.

(2) *Forgive myself.* How can Mr. de Voltaire bear a mortal hatred to a people among whom he has such zealous Friends? *Christ.*

(3) *Universal Library.* We know not whether this encomium is properly applied to Mr. de Voltaire: until now it has not been given to any man to speak of every thing, and at the same time to speak well of every thing: the powers of the understanding have their bounds, and beyond them it always loses in depth what it gains in surface. Edit.



render him that complete justification among my countrymen which posterity will one day render him. (1) *Odere incolumem, postgenitis carum!* His intention cannot be to give a free course to calumny: No! he will fell that monster to the ground as soon as he discovers him. I am persuaded that my *Reflections*, if he deigns to read them, will not be displeasing to him, and that, far from making him my enemy, they will procure me his esteem. You are sensible of the respect I bear you, and with what regard, I am, &c.

(1) *Odere incolumem.* We know not whether Mr. de Voltaire has enemies, but we feel in ourselves that he may be confuted without hatred and even with admiration.——Posterity will surely value one part of his works very highly, and we sincerely wish that they may not have any reproaches to cast on the other. Edit.



## (1) CRITICAL REFLEXIONS.

*On the 1st Chapter of the 7th Volume of Mr. de  
VOLTAIRE'S Works.*

OF all vices the most hurtful to society, of all wrongs the most irreparable, of all crimes the blackest, is certainly calumny. The detriment which they suffer who are the objects and the victims of it, is of infinite extent : this is an incontestible truth, and Mr. de Voltaire has placed it in its strongest point of view in many parts of his works. It is also true that the more weighty an accusation is, the more clear ought to be the proofs of it. These principles admit no exception, even when the meanest individual of society is to be arraigned : therefore caution is still more necessary when a whole nation is attacked : and the more extent is given to an accusation of crimes, the better grounded should be the proofs.

But are there any imputations which can be laid on a people in general ? Can a whole nation be accessory to a crime ? Can the murder of Charles the first be with justice imputed to the whole English nation ? Or the massacre of St. Bartholemew to the French in the reign of Charles IX. ? Every universal proposition is suspicious and liable to error, more especially when we speak of the general character of a nation, the shades of which are always much diversified, according to the station, rank, temper, and profession of every individual. Each province of an empire is as different from the next, as either of these differ from the capital, and the capital from the court, where also each family has a particular tint by which the individuals of it are divided into various characters. If in a wood there are not two leaves which bear a strict resemblance, in the world there are not two faces perfectly alike, nor two men exactly of the same way of

(1) We have taken the liberty to retrench some parts of these reflexions which appear unnecessary : But we shall be careful to preserve all the encomiums which are given to Mr. de Voltaire. *Edit.*



thinking on every subject, how is it possible to give the moral picture of a nation with one dash of the pen? The morality of a nation may be compared to that of individuals, of which it is the aggregate: nature varies in the individual according to physical accidents, which alter his temperament: there is a similar variation in nations, according as political accidents change their constitution: nations have *their clear-obscure*: they have their bright hours in which their virtues shine forth; they have also others in which their virtues are obscured: but nations never are perfectly virtuous or vicious: and besides, they never are for a long time stationary: inconstancy is the lot of humanity.

If this be true with regard to nations in general, it is much more so with respect to the Jews in particular. They have been scattered thro' so many nations, that they have, we may say, adopted in each country, after a certain time, the characters of the inhabitants: a Jew in London bears as little resemblance to a Jew at Constantinople, as this last resembles a Chinese Mandarin! a Portuguese Jew of Bourdeaux, and a German Jew of Metz appear two beings of a different nature! It is therefore impossible to speak of the manners of the Jews in general without entering into a very long detail, and into particular distinctions: the Jew is a Camelian that assumes all the colours of the different climates he inhabits, of the different people he frequents, and of the different governments under which he lives.

Notwithstanding this, Mr. de Voltaire has melted them all down to the same substance, and has given us a shocking picture of them which bears no resemblance.

*The Christian and Mahometan religion, he says first, look up to the Jewish, as their parent, and by a very extraordinary (1) contradiction they have for this parent*

(1) *By a very extraordinary contradiction.* The ancient Jewish religion was holy and venerable, it was the worship which God himself had ordered, but this worship, according to the divine oracles, was to be abrogated, its sacrifices abolished, and its ministers cast out.—The present Jewish Religion is, in the opinion of Christians and Turks, this worship condemned. Where is the contradiction in their rejecting the one, and paying due respect to the other?



*both respect and horror.* He might have added what Mr. de Montesquieu says somewhere, *she is a mother who has brought two daughters into the world that have loaded her with stripes.*

But why does Mr. Voltaire, who was born to enlighten the world, add to that cloud of popular prejudices which have been heaped upon the professors of this religion to the scandal of humanity? how could this great man in despite of his understanding and his heart, in contempt of reason and truth, fall into such an absence of mind? For what more gentle term can I use, when I see the enemy of prejudices yielding up his pen to the blindest profession, that common tool of calumny, a monster which he has so often felled to the ground! We cannot refrain from the use of this term, especially when we see him conclude this chapter by such horrid expressions. *In short you will find nothing amongst them (that is the Jews) but an ignorant and barbarous people, who have joined, for a long time, the basest avarice to the most detestable superstition, and the most violent hatred for all those nations, which tolerate and enrich them: we must not however (he says in his tender mercy) we must not burn them!*

I shall say modestly to Mr. Voltaire that many of those whom he treats so cruelly, would rather suffer the pains of fire than to merit these undeserved imputations: It would perhaps be easy to shew that the Jews are not more ignorant, barbarous or superstitious than other nations, and that the rich among them are more inclined to profuseness than to avarice, which is not the case among other people: But no other proof is necessary than an appeal to the public, to be informed that the Jews adopt so strongly the patriot spirit of the nations among which they live, that they push it farther even than the natives themselves: The Jews are jealous to an excess of the glory of those na-

## D

There is more wit than truth in the saying of Mr. de Montesquieu: The ignorant and selfish fanaticism of some Christians has perhaps loaded the Jewish nation with many stripes: But the fanaticism of some Christians is not the Christian Religion: True Christianity favours neither of cruelty nor inhumanity. The Mahometan Religion announced itself with fire and sword in hand! The Religion of christians has no weapons but persuasion and benevolence, disinterestedness and patience. *Christ.*



tions who receive them and which they (1) enrich: If Mr. Voltaire will allow himself a little time to review the subject, (for to his own tribunal I appeal) he will see the necessity of making reparation for what he has said of the Jewish nation, to truth, to the age he lives in, but above all to posterity, who may plead his (1) authority for oppressing and destroying a people already groaning under too many calamities.

If Mr. Voltaire had acted according to that principle of sound reason, which he affects to do, he would have begun by distinguishing from the other Jews the Spanish and the Portugueze, who never have been mixed or incorporated with the crowd of the other sons of Jacob: He would have made this great distinction evident: I am sensible that it is little known in France, and that the want of proper information on this head has been detrimental on many occasions, to the Portugueze nation of Bourdeaux. Mr. Voltaire cannot be ignorant of the scrupulous exactness of the Portugueze and Spanish Jews not to intermix in marriage, alliance, or any other way with the Jews of other nations: He has been in Holland, and knows that they have separate synagogues, and that altho' they profess the same religion and the same articles of faith, yet their ceremonies have often no resemblance: The manners of the Portugueze Jews are also very different from those of the rest: The former have no beards nor any thing peculiar in their dress. The rich among them vie with the other nations of Europe in refinement, elegance and show: and differ from them in worship only. Their variance with their other brethren is at such a height, that if a Portugueze Jew in England or Holland married a German Jewess, he would of course lose all his prerogatives, be no longer reckoned a member of their synagogue, forfeit all civil and ecclesiastical preferments, be absolutely di-

(1) *They enrich.* It would be a point not unworthy the attention of those who are versed in politicks, to enquire whether the Jews enrich those countries that admit them, or whether they only enrich themselves, or whether they do both these things at the same time. which is our opinion. *Cbrist.*

(2) *Plead his Authority.* Mr. Voltaire would certainly have disowned these imputations had he foreseen such consequences from them: However, we do not think that the Jewish nation has much to fear from them: The public will know how to put a just value on them. *Edit.*



vorced from the (1) body of the nation, and not even buried with his Portugueze brethren: They think in general that they are descended from the tribe of Juda, and they hold that the chief families of it were sent into Spain at the time of the Babylonish captivity: This is the cause of those distinctions and of that elevation of mind which is observed among them, and which even their brethren of other nations seem to (2) acknowledge.

By this wise policy they have preserved purer morals, and have acquired a certain importance which helps even Christians to distinguish them from the other Jews. They do not then deserve those epithets which Mr. Voltaire lavishes on them: The Jews of Holland brought thither great riches at the end of the fifteenth century, and with manners irreproachable greatly improved the trade of that commonwealth. Their Synagogue was like an assembly of senators, and when German noblemen went into it, they could not be persuaded that those there present were of the same nation with those of Germany. They have been of greater use to Holland, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, than the French refugees were at the end of it: These latter, after the repeal of the edict of Nantz, brought into Holland much industry and little (3) wealth; the Portugueze, besides much wealth, drew into Holland the trade of Spain, and excited the industry of all the rest (4): their descendants have been rather dupes than knaves: They have often been the prey of usurers, rarely, if ever, usurers themselves. Scarcely can one instance be given of a Portugueze Jew executed at Amsterdam or the Hague, during two centuries: It would be hard

(1) *The Body of the nation.* What a schism! *Christ.*

(2) *Seem to acknowledge.* The truth of the author's assertion is evident, that his *apology for the Jews in general* is a *pan-gyrick of the Portugueze nation.*

(3) *Little wealth.* This fact is undoubted, altho' it clashes with the notions Mr. Voltaire has formed to himself, of the immense sums of gold and silver which the Protestants carried with them out of France. *Edit.*

(4) *Industry of all the rest.* To be convinced of the influence of the Jews on trade, let any man go to the exchange at Amsterdam, and he will see the greatest hurry of business on every day of the week, except Saturday: On this, the Jewish Sabbath there appears a visible stagnation, which can be imputed to no other cause but to the absence of the Jews. *Translator.*



to find in the annals of mankind, so numerous a body of people as that of the Portugueze and Spanish Jews settled in Holland and England, among whom so few crimes punishable by law have been committed; and to this I call to witness all well-informed Christians of those nations. The vices which may be laid to their charge are not only of a different, but even of an opposite nature to those which Mr. Voltaire imputes to them: Luxury, profuseness, love of women, vanity, contempt for industry and for trade, which some of them have too much neglected, these have been the causes of their decline. A supercilious gravity and a noble haughtiness are the distinguishing characters of this nation: But these vices, I repeat it, have nothing in common with those which Mr. Voltaire casts on them.

Let us give some instances of what we have said. Has not Baron *de Belmonte* been employed by the Court of Madrid, as resident at the Hague, to the satisfaction of both powers? Have not *D'Alvaro Nunes d'Acosta*, and his Father, served the court of Lisbon with equal dignity and fidelity? Have not the *Suassos*, the *Texeiras*, the *Nunés*, the *Prados*, the *Ximenes*, the *Pereiras*, and many others deserved the respect of those who know them? *Machado* was one of the favourites of King *William*: That monarch acknowledged that he had done his troops in Flanders great services: Baron *d'Aguillard*, Treasurer of the Queen of Hungary, is still regretted at Vienna: Mr. *Gradis* is esteemed at the Court of France: I should be tedious if I attempted to give a compleat list of all those who might be mentioned with praise, and who yet if Mr. *Voltaire* was to be believed, would deserve the most odious of all characters. Those who are any way acquainted with the Portugueze Jews in France, Holland, and England, well know that so far from their having as he says, *the bitterest hatred for those nations who tolerate them*, they deem themselves on the contrary to form one people with them. Their Spanish and Portugueze extraction is become



now a point merely of ecclesiastical discipline, which a severe critick might arraign of presumption and vanity, but never of avarice and superstition.

This is a faithful picture of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. We may form a yet more advantageous notion of them, and a more exact and just one, if we attend to this, that they have greater obstacles to surmount than any other nation, in order to their preserving a good character: They are deprived of many resources for getting bread which the professors of other religions have: Their wants are more numerous and more craving, of course their virtues meet with more obstacles, and their vices with stronger temptations: If necessity knows no law, and if as necessity increases, laws are less observed, except people be good by nature, it must be allowed that the Portuguese Jews settled in Holland, have more virtue, than other nations; and this they have proved by a steady and unblemished conduct more than two centuries.

Let us say a word of the (1) German and Polish Jews. Is it surprizing that a people who are deprived of all the privileges of society, who increase and multiply by the laws of nature and religion, who are despised and reviled on all sides, who are often persecuted, always insulted (2), is it surprizing, I say, that among them human nature debased and degraded, should seem to have no acquaintance with any thing but worldly want? The sharp stings of want inspire these martyrs to it with every means of banishing or lessening it. That contempt which is heaped on them choaks up all the seeds of virtue and honour: There can be no sense of shame, where undefer-

(1) *German and Polish Jews.* There are in London and at Amsterdam many German Jews, persons of the highest honour, who carry on trade with the greatest probity: These are not answerable for the conduct of that swarm of Polish and German Jews whom want drives from their country, and to whom their brethren out of charity, give shelter. In the German courts there have been Jews of distinguished merit. Mr. Boas is esteemed and loved at the Hague by people of the first quality. *Aut.*

(2) *Often persecuted, always insulted.* We have been often witnesses of this and have been affected by it. *Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto. Christ.*



ved contempt precedes guilt : To cover the innocent with ignominy is to pave the way to it. And is it (1) guilt to continue firmly attached to a religion which was formerly looked on as sacred by those very persons who now condemn it ? We ought to pity them if they err ; but it would be ungenerous (2) not to admire the constancy, resolution, courage, steadiness, and disinterestedness with which they give up so many worldly advantages (3). Who would not praise a son who gives up his right to a great estate, because he thinks, perhaps without just grounds, that he cannot take possession of it without acting in opposition to his father's will, by the act required of him ? Ought so delicate, so praise worthy, so noble and so uncommon a feeling to draw on him from his younger brothers, who enjoy the estate, contempt, insults and abuse (4) ? It is not sufficient to abstain from burning people with faggots ; they may be burned with the pen, and this fire is so much more to be dreaded, because it lasts to future generations. What can be expected from the ignorant savage vulgar, when the destruction of an unfortunate nation is determined on, if these horrid prejudices are authorised by the greatest genius of the most enlightened age ? Let him consult his reason and his heart, and I am confident he will employ all his talents in recanting his errors : he will shew

(1) *Is it guilt ?* Christians think so. But altho' they think the Jews shut their eyes against conviction, they do not claim a right of abusing them, they rather pity them. Such indeed are the principles of those who are led by the true spirit of christianity. *Christ.*

(2) *Not to admire.* This firmness may be admired, whilst the object of it is condemned. *Christ.*

(3) *So many worldly advantages.* A Jew who generously gives up all these advantages for a religion which he believes to be a true one, altho' he may err, is certainly as good as a philosopher who is indifferent to religion in general. This indifference costs little, it requires no sacrifices, and lays no constraint on his pride or his passions. *Edit.*

(4) *Contempt, insults and abuse.* We must allow that the modern christians have not inherited these sentiments from the primitive christians ; nor are they those of the most ancient fathers, the councils, or the apostles, and more especially those of Jesus Christ, their head and pattern. *Father,* says he as he expired, *forgive them, for they know not what they do ;* words full of magnanimity and heroism, which we cannot help admiring. We have no fears from the spirit of the christian religion : Our real enemies are, envy, avarice, false policy, &c. covered with the mask of religion. *Edit.*



in a masterly way that the mean characters of certain Polish and German Jews, are not to be laid to the charge of that ancient, divine and sacred religion. Want, persecution, various accidents, render them such as other people would be if they professed a different faith, but found themselves in the same circumstances. If among these wretches there have been now and then some *coiners*, they are not the only coiners: They do not even make up the greatest number of the guilty in this way. If some of them *deal in old cloaths*, this like all other trades is useful to society, and authoris'd in every religion. But as Mr. Voltaire weighs in the balance of reason and equity, the crimes of nations; as he puts in one scale the judicial regicide of the English, in the other the repeated attempts on the life of a good king by a set of fanatics, along with the horrid massacre perpetrated by one part of the nation upon the other; so let him weigh all the crimes which the poor German Jews have committed during ten centuries; allowing even, what is not proved, that they have been greater clippers and cheats than poor people of other religions. Let him put in opposition to these petty thefts and filchings, those evils which people of the most illustrious rank are continually bringing upon the world; the secret and publick crimes which their riches palliate, hide and steal away from the severity of justice, because appearances are saved and intercepted from publick view by that splendour which surrounds the culprits. Let him reflect on the transgressions of those who are punished by publick infamy; let him weigh, calculate and compare, and then let him pronounce the sentence. Can it be Mr. Voltaire, who gives a free course to such dark unmerited calumnies, that have been heaped on this people? Why does he not rather employ his talents in dispelling a prejudice which disgraces human nature?

In this chapter he seems to me besides to have asserted other things rashly, altho' they are not of so great importance as the former. That supposed ig-



norance which he ascribes to the Jews, is by no means proved (1). They had, and still have among them learned men, (2) in those countries where they enjoy tranquility. Their knowledge of tactics seems not to have been contemptible; their language has great beauties; and if Mr. Voltaire had added a competent knowledge of the Hebrew (3), to the immensity of his other accomplishments, he would have been struck with the poetical beauties of which it is susceptible. What transpires of them in the works of men who are but imitators of poor translations is a proof of this; witness the noble odes of Rousseau and the sublime passages in Athaliah. Has not Mr. Voltaire himself drawn materials out of the same mine to adorn works of a different kind? Isaiah is full of poetic fire, which shews that arts, sciences, good taste, prevailed at the court of Juda. It would be easy to prove, that after the captivity and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, they had learned men as well in Arabia as in Spain, where they were frequently physicians and comptrollers of the household to kings. Maimonides possessed all the sciences of his age.

*This people, says Mr. Voltaire, were never famous for any art. It is difficult to pierce thro' the obscu-*

(1) *By no means proved*—Aristotle, quoted by Clearchus, says that when he was in Asia, he was visited by a Jew of such profound erudition, that in comparison to him the Greeks seemed exceedingly ignorant.—See *la Republique des Hebreux par Basnage*, p. 19. of the Holland edition, 8vo. *Aut.*

(2) *They still have among them learned men.* We make no doubt of it; only we wish that these learned men would employ a little more of their time, in the defence of their sacred writings, against so many writers who daily attack them; and that they would not always leave it to Christians to fight their battles. Works of this kind, cleared of all those Rabinnical ideas, which are now out of fashion, even among the Jews, would certainly do them honour and be useful to the publick. *Christ.*

(3) *A competent knowledge of the Hebrew.* The author could not more politely reproach Mr. Voltaire with his ignorance of the holy language, but we know not whether this charge is well founded. For besides that, this illustrious writer often quotes the Hebrew text, and that we have heard some of his friends say that he has been long employed in this study, would he have been so imprudent as to speak of our writings as he does, without understanding our language? Is it not probable that the mistakes which escape him rather proceed from want of thought, than from ignorance of a language so necessary to his purpose? And if he does not understand it, would it not become him better to own it, than to make a vain parade of knowing what he does not know? *Edit.*



rity of antiquity so remote ; but in spite of that veil which the Greeks have cast over every thing that went before them, with a view of engrossing to themselves the origin of every art and science, it is clear that the Jews have preceded them in many arts, were it only that of engraving on precious (1) stones. The same might be said of many other arts, and they might be suspected for some more ; at least it cannot be denied that the Hebrew alphabet was the original of the Greek, which has served as a model of Nomenclature to that of the Latin.

*The Jews*, says Mr. Voltaire, *never were natural philosophers, geometricians or astronomers.* I say nothing of natural philosophy, as no ancient people ever made any progress in it. The natural history written by Solomon, preceded those written by Aristotle and Pliny by many centuries. It would have been difficult for Solomon as a monarch or a philosopher, to have inserted a greater number of frivolous things into his works than these two learned men have done : Solomon wrote *from the Cedar to the Hyssop*, this suffices. Are there not traces of Geometry to be found in the description of the tabernacle, and still more in that of the temple of Solomon, and in the description of that temple of which Ezekiel gives the plan ? As to Astronomy, I am amazed that Mr. Voltaire does not know that the Jews, of all ancient nations, were the best acquainted with the calculations on the revolutions of the sun and moon, the art of intercalation, and all those other astronomical discoveries by which they have preserved their calendar free from that confusion and embarrassment to which the Greeks and Romans were subject. This observation is worthy of (2) attention. Hence the opinion of their Rab-

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(1) *Precious stones.* The proof is in the book of Exodus, ch. 28. v. 9. *And thou shalt take two Onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel.*

(2) *Worthy of attention.* *Hactenus computus anni judæi quo nihil accuratius, nihil perfectius in eo genere ut nostris conditoribus cyclorum paschalium & ætætarum per illos melius hanc artem discere liceat aut tacere—Joseph Scaliger, Lib. 2. Ant.*



bies, that this extraordinary astronomical knowledge was revealed to Moses, and that it was always a secret to other nations. This however is certain, that Moses had brought certain discoveries of this nature from Egypt, which were superior to those of his age in this science. The work of Mr. Pluche, which is not sufficiently (1) esteemed, because our learned men are generally unacquainted with Hebrew, unfolds the principles of all those sciences which the Greeks have borrowed from the Jews and Phenicians, who were once their ancestors and neighbours. The arts and sciences were reared among these latter altho' they afterwards neglected them.

But I proceed to shew that the figure and nomenclature of the alphahet, came originally from the Hebrews or Phenicians; for these had one common language which was no *jargon*. The *Pænulus* or the *Carthaginian* of Plautus proves it sufficiently, as well as many other passages of antiquity; but above all the names and figures of the letters of the alphabet. It must be obvious to every one, that the characters A, B, C, D, are a corruption of the Greek letters, *Alpha*, *Beta*, *Gamma*, *Delta*, and it is as clear that these are taken from the Hebrew letters, *Aleph*, *Beth*, *Guimel*, *Daleth*. What demonstrates this point is, that the name of every letter in the Hebrew alphabet denotes the figure which that letter represents, and is thus connected with the first origin of writing which was hieroglyphical. Hieroglyphicks speak to the eye thro' the medium of images rather than by arbitrary characters. I shall mention but a few plain instances; the *Beth* signifies *an House*, of which that letter bears a resemblance; the *Gimel*, or *Gamel*, signifies a *Camel*, and the letter represents the neck of that animal: the *Daleth* signifies a *Door*, and is like

(1) *Not sufficiently esteemed.* The Jewish apologist does Mr. Pluche more justice here, than Mr. Voltaire. This latter speaks of him with an air of contempt and disdain, which reflects no honour on his criticism. It seems also to favour of resentment. It is well known that Mr. Pluche was not a *Philosopher*. *Christ*.



one; the *Vau*, signifies and represents a *Pillar*; the *Zain*, denotes a *Sabre*, and has the figure of it; the *Sin* or *Sen*, signifies *Teeth*, and represents a comb or a trident; the *Gnain*, an *Eye*; the *Phe*, a *Mouth*, resemble these things nearly. So much is sufficient to show how many proofs might be added to enrich Mr. Pluche's system. Perhaps on a future day I may give a more ample collection on this subject.

Mr. Voltaire, in the same chapter, seems again to upbraid the Jews with the manner in which they exterminated some colonies of Canaanites, and ascribes to this action that hatred which other nations bear them. I suppose Mr. de Voltaire's meaning must be, that this was the cause of the ancient hatred of nations. Now this hatred can only take place between the conquered and the conquerors, and I cannot think that it was stronger against the Jews than against any other nation in like case. In the first place, the Jews cannot be charged here with any cruelty, because a divine oracle sentenced those men to destruction; they had filled up the measure of their iniquities, and as the Scripture says, the earth was preparing to vomit them up and cast them out. But what confutes this charge without recurring to authority, is that the legislator of the Jews, in his sacred code, orders them in every other war, to observe the greatest caution: He enjoins them to forbear even from cutting down trees, or commencing hostilities, until peace was offered. The rights of nature and of nations, in times of peace and war, were as religiously observed among the Jews as among other nations through this country. Jephtha's reasons for declaring war against the Ammonites, are drawn up in a stile which may serve as a model to all generations. The oracle upbraids the Jews with their too great mercy towards the proscribed nations. In short, if we compare the history of the Jews with that of every other nation, it will be found that they have all behaved themselves nearly alike. In ancient times, celibacy was rare, and polygamy almost universal: The art



of navigation was not sufficiently extended to hurt population or to convey colonies to distant regions. As soon as a nation found itself too much confined within its borders, it rushed into another country and endeavoured to settle there. Bodily strength and force set to work by necessity, were the only rights then known. What other right did Virgil give to Eneas with his fugitive gods, when he dethroned Turnus, ravished the hand of Lavinia, and settled in Italy? Let us strip his history of all the enchanting fictions of poetry, and what else shall we find in it! Romulus treated the villages bordering on the Tiber, just as Moses did the people of Arnon and Jaboc!

One man may not perhaps resemble another, but the men of one country always resemble those of another in a high degree, and still more, those of their own country. The fermentation of passions, which in all nations, are the same, produces our actions, and their different combinations depend upon circumstances. These circumstances, although admitting variety, are perpetually repeated: Uniformity is at the bottom, variety is in the form. Interest, ambition, vanity, love of glory, the universal taste for pleasure, always rule mankind. Virtue makes struggles. Sometimes victorious, often vanquished, always opposed, seldom can she establish a firm and lasting empire upon the wrecks of vice, of which the number is prodigious. The difference of climates can alone produce a physical alteration perceivable in the general organization of a people taken collectively, and may have an influence on morals. The animals, the fruits of the earth are a proof of the power of climate: What l'Abbe' du Bos and Mr. Montesquieu have said on this subject is incontestible, if it is confined within proper bounds. But moral causes may restrain for a time the power of physical causes. Of those, education is the most powerful; but it can never entirely change the essence of the character; the form only will appear altered. Education unfolds qualities which it does not give. Cir-



cumstances and natural temper are the tests of virtue, which is at the bottom of the heart, and constitutes the moral system of a people. Let us not then make an absurd exception from an eternal truth, in order to turn the Jewish people into ridicule, and render them the objects of detestation.

Might they not say to the whole Christian world what Mr. de Montesquieu puts into the mouth of a young Jewess, who was arraigned before the tribunal of the inquisition. We need alter but one word, *You despise, you (1) hate us, who believe the same things you do, because we do not believe every thing you do. We profess a religion which you know was formerly the favourite of God: We think that God still loves it, and because you think that he loves it no longer, you despise those who are fallen into so pardonable an error, as to believe that He loves still what he loved formerly. If you have been so much favoured by heaven as to have been shown the truth, you should be thankful; but ought the children who have entered into their father's inheritance, to hate those who have been deprived of it! The Jewish religion, (says the same author) is an ancient trunk of a tree which has produced two branches that cover the earth.* Let then this sacred source be respected, and let those be pitied who have such great sacrifices to make to this old law. The Patriarchs, the Priests, the ancient Jews, offered up lambs, sheep and bulls; the modern Jews offer up on the altar of their faith much more costly victims, self-love, that precious incense so hardly surrendered by vanity, posts, employments, those shortest and most effectual means of laying up riches and of acquiring consequence in the world. Philosophers (for in spite of Mr. Voltaire we have some amongst us) have feelings too nice to make a (2) traffick of religion. They have respect enough for God to adore his decrees in

(1) Once more we must observe, that the Christian religion does not teach us to *despise* or *hate* any thing but errors. *Christ.*

(2) *Traffick of religion.* Christians do not invite the Jews to make a traffick of religion, but only to open their eyes before the light. *Christ.*



secret. The Jews are not less worthy (1) of praise for having firmness and constancy of mind sufficient to remain in that religion which is proscribed and reviled.

Mr. Voltaire has already begun (2) an apology for this nation, but in a stile unbecoming the (3) subject. I hope he will vouchsafe to do it more seriously. It belongs to (4) him to accomplish the extirpation of those prejudices which he has combated, and which so cruelly keep up the hatred of Christians against the Jews, who are accused of having put Christ to death. He was judicially condemned to die by the Romans only, who, as Christians themselves allow, then had alone the power of life and death over the Jews. Even Herod was a heathen : Pilate had the (5) greatest share in the condemnation : The punishment of the cross was unknown to the Jews according to Mr. Voltaire. And altho' the cruelty and fury with which their ancestors are charged should be (6) well grounded, and even granting that the ancient Jews not only approved but besides demanded, pressed and solicited this condemnation, (7) Mr.

(1) *Worthy of Praise.* Those who look on the firmness of the Jews as obstinacy, cannot avoid pitying and excusing them. *Christ.*

(2) *Begun an Apology.* It is very singular and remarkable, that Mr. Voltaire, who is a declared enemy of the Jews in all points, should be so unlucky as to strive to justify them in this one. *Christ.*

(3) *Unbecoming the subject.* See in the *Nouveaux Melanges*, tome 3 ieme, the sermon of the pretended Rabin Akib, where this Christian falls equally on Jews and Christians. *Edit.*

If the stile is unbecoming, the arguments he uses are still worse, all that he says on this subject can only serve to excite the contempt of the learned, and the indignation of Christians. *Christ.*

(4) *It belongs to him.* Of all Christians he is the only one to whom we can have this obligation. *Edit.*

The Editors are mistaken here, another author has undertaken to justify their fathers, and has ventured to pronounce the *reus est Mortis*. He is bold enough to say that, *whoever rises up against the religion of his country, deserves death* : What an imprudent man is this! *Christ.*

(5) *The greatest share.* This certainly is misrepresenting or disguising facts. *Christ.*

(6) *Be well grounded.* Can any body doubt of this? Have the author of the reflections and Mr. Voltaire forgot those horrid cries, *Tolle, crucifige sanguis ejus super nos & super filios nostrus?* *Christ.*

(7) *Mr. Voltaire shews.* Mr. Voltaire endeavours to shew it, but his proofs are far from being satisfactory, and so the world has deemed them: See lower, letter 5th.——The difference is obvious between the modern



Voltaire shews that it is as unfair to make their descendants answerable for this, as it would be to censure the present race of Romans for the rape of the Sabines, or for plundering the Samnites. Besides, according to the principles of the Christian religion, the sufferings of Christ were (1) necessary for the salvation of men; and according to Christians, the decree of providence was to be fulfilled. A preacher once said, that if Pilate had not happily thus expressed himself, *Quod Scripsi, Scripsi*, the world had not yet been saved. Let Christians then cease to persecute and revile those who *as men are their brethren, and as Jews, are their Fathers*. These are the very (2) words of Mr. Voltaire. It is his province to place those truths in their fullest light.

Nothing would be more worthy of his pen than to endeavour to stifle national animosities of every kind. To put an end to them would be the highest service that could be done to human nature. I have sometimes said to myself that men would be happy if they had but one religion; but when I reflected on the private interest which subsists even among those who have the same worship, I perceived that the mysteries of human nature, took their rise in human nature. Carthage and Rome did not hate one another because they had a different religion, but because their interest clashed. I shall not speak of the antipathies subsisting between modern nations, but I think that if all the great men in Europe unanimously laboured to conciliate the jarring interests of nations, it would appear that there is less opposition between them than is sup-

Romans and the Jews. These latter blinded by the hereditary prejudices of their nation, so far from abhorring the crime of their fathers, approved it, defended it, and, as much as in them lies, consented to it. Their sole plea of excuse is that which Christ, when he was dying, produced in their favour, ignorance. This the apostle has repeated, *Si cognovissent enim, nunquam Dominum Glorie crucifixissent*. This one sentence says more in favour of the Jews, than all the arguments of Mr. Voltaire. *Christ.*

(1) *The sufferings of Christ were necessary.* The necessity of the death of Christ does no way excuse those who were the authors of it. *Christ.*

(2) *The very words of Mr. Voltaire.* If Mr. Voltaire acts consequentially, if he holds the Jews *as men to be his brethren, and as Jews to be his fathers*, it must be allowed that this great man uses his family very severely. *Christ.*



posed, and that the system of the Abbe St. Pierre might become something more than the dream of a worthy man. I have in my head the embryo of this system which requires time and meditation to unfold. (1) An eminent writer has lately given us a sketch of it. The first drafts are always imperfect, but they are improved by time, and this time would be well and usefully employed in the service of human nature. I exhort those whose knowledge is more extensive than mine to think seriously of it, and above all things not to forget the Jews.

(1) *An. eminent writer, &c.* John James Rousseau, see his *project of a perpetual peace*, and in the *Nouveaux Melanges troisieme partie*, the jokes of Mr. Voltaire on this scheme, the intention of which is at least laudable. *Edit.*



## L E T T E R (1) III.

*From the author of the Reflexions to Mr. VOLTAIRE,  
sending him the manuscript of the Reflexions.*

S I R,

**W** H E R E I address any other but you I should be in some difficulty. I am sending you Critical Reflexions on a part of your immortal writings; I who am their greatest admirer, I who ought to read and study them in silence. But as I respect the author more than I regard the work, I presume his magnanimity will pardon me this piece of criticism, in favour of the truth which is so dear to him, and from which perhaps he has never swerved (2) but in this single instance. I expect at least that he will think me less unworthy of pardon on this account, that I am acting in favour of a whole nation to which I belong, and to which I owe this apology.

I had the honour, sir, of seeing you in Holland when I was very young. Since that time I have been improving myself in your works which have been ever my most delightful study. These studies have taught me to contend with you, nay more, they have given me courage enough to tell you so.

I am beyond all expression,

With sentiments full of  
esteem and veneration, &c.

(1) *This letter and the following were printed at the Hague in 1766. Edit.*

(2) *But in this single Instance. This is a compliment: Mr. Voltaire does not deny his having swerved from the truth in more than one instance. Edit.*



## LETTER IV.

Mr. VOLTAIRE'S *Answer to the foregoing Letter.*

S I R,

THE lines you complain of are cruel and unjust. There are among you very learned and respectable persons. Your letter is a sufficient evidence of this. I shall take care to insert a cancel-leaf in the new (1) edition. When a man is in the wrong he should make reparation for it, and I was wrong in attributing to a whole nation the vices of some individuals.

I shall tell you as frankly, that there are many who cannot endure your (2) laws, your books, or your superstitions. They say that your nation has done, in every age, much hurt to itself and to the (3) human race. If you are a philosopher, as you seem to be, (4) you will think as those gentlemen do, but you will not say it. Superstition is the most dreadful scourge of the earth; it is superstition that in every age has caused so many Jews and Christians to be slaughtered; 'tis superstition that still sends you Jews to the stake among nations praise worthy (5) in other respects. There are certain aspects in which human nature is infernal nature: But genteel people when

(1) *In the new edition.* It appears to us that it would be better to insert a cancel-leaf in the foregoing edition, and to correct the new one. *Edit.*

(2) *Your laws, your books, or your superstitions.* These laws and these books, (at least those which form the basis of religion) are respected by the whole Christian world. *Aut.*

(3) *Much hurt to the human race.* Perhaps the Jewish nation, like others, has done much hurt to itself, but I cannot see that it has done much to mankind in general. I except those nations which the divine oracle had sentenced to destruction.

Where is the people, what is the nation, or history, to which we may not apply those five lines of a middling poet (Statius)?

*Excidat illa dies ævo, nec postera credant*

*Sæcula: nos certe taceamus et obruta multa*

*Nocte tegi nostræ patiamur crimina Gentis.* *Aut.*

(4) *You will think as these gentlemen do.* I have not the honour of thinking as those gentlemen do. *Aut.*

(5) *Nations in other respects.* I grant that superstition has been in all ages the cause of great evils. *Aut.*



they are passing by the place of execution, where they break men on the wheel, order their coachman to drive on quickly to the opera house, in order to divert their attention from this horrid sight on the way.

I might enter into a (1) dispute with you about the knowledge you ascribe to the ancient Jews, and could shew you that they were as ignorant as the French in the reign of Chilperick. I could make you acknowledge that the jargon of a little province, mixed with the Chaldaick, Phenician, and Arabian dialects, was as poor and rough a language as our old Gaulish. But perhaps I should (2) provoke you to anger, and you seem to be too worthy a man to deserve provocation. As you are a Jew, (3) remain so. You will never cut the throats of 42,000 men because they pronounced the word Schibboleth wrong, nor destroy 24,000 men for having lain with the (4) Madianite women. But be a philosopher. This is my best wish to you in this short life.

I have the honour of remaining,

Sir,

With all the sentiments of respect,

Due to you, &c.

V—, Gentleman in Ordinary  
to the most Christian King.

(1) *Enter into a dispute with you.* It does not become me to dispute with Mr. Voltaire; I should be a dwarf attacking a giant. But even tho' the giant should add cunning to strength, yet the dwarf might not perhaps be in the wrong. *Aut.*

(2) *I should provoke you.* I never am provoked to anger against my teachers, but at the same time I never yield to mere authority: Their reasons alone can convince me: Besides, it would ill become me to be angry after all the compliments which Mr. Voltaire does me the honour to pay me, and after the generous declaration at the beginning of his letter. *Aut.*

(3) *Remain so.* This is a piece of advice which I shall willingly follow. *Aut.*

(4) *Madianite women.* Mr. Voltaire only wants to be merry at the end of this letter; but he must know that the pronunciation of the word Schibboleth, was not the cause of the massacre of the Ephraimites, but that their corrupt pronunciation of it discovered the conquered party from the other: The horrors of civil war are always more dreadful than those of other wars: And as to the massacre, on account of the Madianites, it was not a punishment inflicted merely for their having lain with them, but for the idolatry to which they gave themselves up thro' the seduction of these women. *Aut.*

See on this subject the letters of the German Jews. *Edit.*



## L E T T E R V.

*From JOSEPH D'ACOSTA, to the Revd. Dr. JOHNSON, minister of Chepstow, in Monmouthshire, containing some observations on the CRITICAL REFLEXIONS, and on Mr. VOLTAIRE.*

**Y**OU ask me, Sir, what people here think of *the reflexions* which I sent you some time ago. It appears to me that they have been well-received even amongst Christians. Two periodical writers have already given an account of them, and both of them a favourable one.

The author of the *Monthly Review* represents our apologist as a skilful advocate, an ingenious and polite writer. He charges him however warmly, with having made too great a distinction between the Portuguese and German Jews, and with having thrown back upon the latter those imputations which Mr. Voltaire casts upon the whole nation.

“ There is something, says he, too partial and invidious in those distinctions, however just they may be, to entitle us to give the author the honourable name of defender of the Jewish nation in general : if Mr. Voltaire himself acknowledges his mistake in charging a whole nation with the vices of some individuals, the apologist is in many respects as culpable as he, in endeavouring to shift the burthen off the shoulders of his own party, the Portuguese and Spaniards, and to lay it on the Germans and Poles. It is undoubted that the former have been to this time more opulent, have had the advantages of a better education, have been received more favourably by the great ; but how far these advantages are to be ascribed to those causes which our author mentions, I shall not undertake to determine. Their general and constant persuasion that they are descended from the principal families which were sent into Babylon, and which they hold were



“ afterwards banished into Spain by Nabuchodono-  
 “ zor, is undoubtedly one of the causes of their scru-  
 “ pulous care to distinguish themselves from their o-  
 “ ther brethren. But it is more than probable that  
 “ the difference subsisting between them proceeds  
 “ from this, that the Spanish and Portugeze Jews  
 “ have always lived in those countries, both under  
 “ the Califfs and Christian princes, in great opulence  
 “ and good repute, as well for their knowledge in  
 “ the arts and (1) sciences, as for their skill in trade  
 “ and business, whilst the other Jews, scattered over  
 “ the whole eastern and western empires have always  
 “ lived, since the time of Constantine the great, in  
 “ Greece and Asia, and since that of Charlemagne,  
 “ in the West, in oppression and misery, looked upon  
 “ as slaves, and inhumanly treated as such. And they  
 “ are treated much in the same manner now, even  
 “ in Europe, almost in every part of Germany, at  
 “ Venice, and in all the (2) ecclesiastical states.”

The apologist has been much affected by this accu-  
 sation of partiality : He has lately answered it, and his  
 answer, which has been published has appeared satis-  
 factory. He observes that this distinction or rather  
 separation of the Portugeze from the other Jews is  
 odious, but that he is not accountable for it : That he  
 is in this part merely an historian, and a faithful one :  
 and that, after all, this constitution of things, of which  
 he is not the founder, has produced, up to this time,  
 very good effects.

He justifies his intentions and proves by the  
 grounds, the progress and even the text of these re-  
 flexions, that whilst he does the Portugeze that ju-  
 stice which they deserve, by distinguishing them  
 from their brethren, he nevertheless comprehends in

(1) *Sciences*. It cannot be denied that the Jews have had the advantage  
 of having had very learned men among them.

(2) *Ecclesiastical States*. We must allow this in justice to the head of the  
 Roman Catholic religion, that there is no country in the world in which less  
 Jewish blood has flown, and in which the laws of humanity have been more  
 respected with regard to our nation, than the Ecclesiastical state. Altho' we  
 do not enjoy there that liberty and those privileges which we have in other  
 countries, yet we do not, nor never did, endure those cruel persecutions,  
 which we have so often experienced in other places. *Edit.*



his apology all the Jews, ancient and modern, and that so far from having loaded the Germans and Poles with the calumnies which have been laid upon the whole nation, he has pleaded their cause not only with impartiality, but also with warmth and zeal.

“ Thus says he, after a short analysis of the reflex-  
 “ ions, I have defended the Jews in general, and con-  
 “ futed the rash judgments that have been passed on  
 “ them : Had I been a professed author I would have  
 “ produced an hundred proofs in favour of my cause :  
 “ I would have shewn that in every age the greatest  
 “ men have made the grossest mistakes in speaking of  
 “ those who professed a tolerated religion, which was  
 “ very different from the established. The primitive  
 “ Christians certainly led austere lives, they practised  
 “ the moral virtues in the (1) highest degree, they  
 “ were certainly neither intolerant nor persecutors:  
 “ (2) Yet Tacitus speaks of them in terms as inde-  
 “ cent as they are false and calumnious : Pliny, the  
 “ the friend and cotemporary of Tacitus, treats them  
 “ with more moderation, and acknowledges the pu-  
 “ rity of their morals. The telescopes of these anci-  
 “ ent observers were different : Every man has  
 “ his own. But it seems that objects are only con-  
 “ sidered in profile and superficially, without going  
 “ to the bottom, when they concern the professors of  
 “ a religion different from our own : How many  
 “ modern Plinys and Tacituses are there who have  
 “ viewed the Jewish nation in profile or in perspec-  
 “ tive and have given of it a mere picture of imagin-  
 “ ation.”

The author of *la Bibliotheque des sciences, & des arts*, treats the apology still more favourably. His criticism is less severe and his encomiums are still greater. “ This work, he says, is written with  
 “ much wit and art : It is written politely too, and  
 “ notwithstanding the small scope which the author  
 “ has taken to defend his nation, which in many

(1) *Highest degree.* This confession of a Jewish author is a proof of his probity : some Christian writers have manifested more partiality. *Christ.*

(2) *Yet Tacitus.* See Annals xv, Ch. 44. *Aut.*



“places is most basely abused, the apologist has been  
 “ingenious enough to comprehend in it a variety of  
 “interesting matters.”

But this learned critick, whether it proceeds from his want of attention, or whether he formed his judgment on some detached expressions, lays the same charge as the English critick, but with less bitterness.

“The witty Israelite, says he, extols highly his  
 “Portuguese brethren, and is apt to give up the  
 “Poles and Germans, excepting a small number, as  
 “a people among whom nature debased and degraded,  
 “seems to have no acquaintance with any thing but  
 “worldly want. This is a sharp expression and of  
 “piercing energy, falling from the pen of the most  
 “polite Jew that ever attempted an apology for his  
 “nation.

“It must however be allowed, says he, speaking  
 “of Mr. Voltaire, that the celebrated author of the  
 “general history of the manner and spirit of nations,  
 “forgets that tone of humanity and good will which  
 “is so often the richest ornament of his works, in  
 “what he says without any exception of the character  
 “of the Jews, *that they are an ignorant and barbarous nation, which has joined for a long time the basest avarice to the most detestable superstition, and the most violent hatred for all those nations which tolerate and enrich them, but yet that they must not be burned.*

“In general, says the critic, Mr. Voltaire has shewn  
 “that he was little acquainted with what concerns  
 “the Jewish nation, ancient or modern: But let that  
 “be as it will, he could not reasonably be offended  
 “with an answer where the apologist scarcely once  
 “censures him, without expressing such respect  
 “and admiration for him as raise him above all the  
 “other writers of this age. And agreeably to this,  
 “the author has received from Mr. Voltaire this  
 “candid declaration, *The lines of which you complain are cruel and unjust.* This is speaking  
 “like a man of honour.”

He concludes by a stroke which I ought not to o-



mit, and which you will read with satisfaction. “ We  
 “ doubt not but that Mr. Voltaire, whilst he is ma-  
 “ king reparation to the Jews, intends to apologize to  
 “ Christians for some other things that have escap-  
 “ ed him concerning this unhappy nation. Every  
 “ one does not think with the apologist, that Mr.  
 “ Voltaire has proved the following point, That it is  
 “ as unjust to make the modern Jews answerable for  
 “ the death of Christ, as it would be to condemn the  
 “ modern Romans for the rape of the Sabines, or for  
 “ plundering the Samnites.”

These, sir, are the opinions that have been given  
 on the work of our apologist. You see that they  
 coincide with your own opinion, and that, excepting  
 the charge of partiality which he certainly does not de-  
 serve, they do him honour. We hope that this work  
 will be useful, not only to the Portuguese and Spa-  
 nish Jews, but to the Jews in general, in opening  
 the eyes of the several powers of the world: And  
 that it will contribute, if not to eradicate, yet at least  
 to weaken the antipathy and hatred, which private in-  
 terest and false policy, rather than the just and pure te-  
 nets of true christianity keep up in the hearts of men.  
 As you breathe this spirit, sir, you lament the mi-  
 series of our nation, whilst you condemn the crimes of  
 some individuals, and the religious errors of the com-  
 munity. We have been long persuaded that we  
 shall always find more protection and humanity a-  
 mong true Christians than among the greatest part of  
 the Deists, notwithstanding their pretended *universal*  
*Toleration*.

You are certainly, as well as the author of *the Bib-*  
*liothèque* and the publick, in expectation that Mr.  
 Voltaire will soon retract, or at least soften, what he  
 has alledged against us. You cannot suspect that  
 after the generous confession he has made of his er-  
 rors, and the promise he has so positively given of re-  
 tracting them, he does not remain in full intent of  
 inserting the cancel-leaf he spoke of. The new tracts



which I now send you, will give you room to judge whether this is likely to happen.(1)

I remain, Revd. Doctor,

Yours, &c.

(1) *Whether this is likely to happen.* Those tracts were, the *Sermon* of the pretended *Rabin Akib*, the *Questions of Zapata*, the *Philosophical Dictionary*, &c. &c. It is well known how the Jews are treated in these. Since Mr. Voltaire's promise, he has published nothing but what speaks of them in the same Stile. Thus the illustrious author has made reparation for his faults, and kept his word! *Edit.*

G



## LETTERS

FROM

CERTAIN JEWS,

OF THE

GERMAN and POLISH SYNAGOGUE,  
at AMSTERDAM,

To Mr. VOLT A I R E.

FIRST PART.

Containing some OBSERVATIONS ON a NOTE, insert-  
ed in the TREATISE ON TOLERATION.

## LETTER I.

*Occasion and Design of these Letters.*

SIR,

THE Spanish and Portugeze Jews are not the only descendants of Abraham, who admire you. There is among the German and Polish Jews, at Amsterdam, a society of friends, who have for a long time made their most pleasing study of your works.

We are continually reading over those masterpieces of literature and philosophy, and still with new pleasure. Your prodigious erudition, the never-failing resources of an imagination full of the liveliest fallies, that brilliant colouring and enchanting stile which raise you indisputably above all the writers of your age, are not the only charms we find in your works. We see in them, with yet greater satisfac-



tion, that abhorrence of persecution and those noble principles of universal benevolence, which are their distinguishing character. We sometimes flattered ourselves that these sentiments, engraven on your heart no doubt, as well as in your writings, would, thro' your goodness, have been extended even unto us, and that we should no longer be the only people on earth, for whom your philosophy could have no bowels.

Still flattered by these hopes, we read over your *Treatise on Toleration*, with that avidity which the very title of it would raise in men who profess a religion that is not established any where, and which is scarcely tolerated in most countries. What was our surprize, when, in a work that announces gentleness and humanity, and whose design seems to be, to bind still faster those cords of love which should unite men, we found you once more treating our people, our sacred writings, and every thing that is dear to us, in a manner so different from that character of equity and moderation you assume! Could we expect to find so much prejudice and so much hatred against an unhappy people in the works of a philosopher, who passes for the friend and reconciler of the human race.

We were struck, especially with a long note, inserted at the 12th article, in which you collect the principal objections of some modern writers against the Pentateuch, and where, by the most odious imputations, you give over the memory of our ancestors, to the execration of all nations.

These objects touch us too nearly, and affect us too strongly, to let us refrain from speaking. Defence becomes necessary when the attacks are so violent and so often repeated. It is time that we should follow the example of our brethren, and be animated with the same zeal; that we should raise our feeble voices in defence of our ancestors, and of those sacred writings which they have transmitted to us, that we should endeavour, as far as our poor talents will per-



mit, to confute those criticisms to which your name, and the illustrious names you quote, would be too apt to give consequence. With this view, and laying aside all prejudice, we shall proceed to discuss in order, every thing you have said in your (1) *pretended useful note*. We do this the more willingly, because whilst we are answering you, we shall at the same time answer other writings, in which the same arguments have been often and tediously repeated.

You declare, sir, that you love truth. We love it too, and we believe that we are defending it. Might we be so happy as to bring you acquainted with it! At any rate we shall endeavour to speak conformably to it; and we disavow before-hand, every thing that might escape us, favouring of bitterness, or too great (2) freedom. We know that one of the laws of that code which you despise, commands us *to honour* (3) *the face of the old man*, and we are sensible that it becomes us to respect great talents, altho' we cannot help condemning the abuse of them.

You will find in our letters, neither the taste nor the elegance of our Portugueze brethren. It is scarcely possible but that Germans, settled among the Dutch, should sometimes have an harsh stile and a Teutonick mode of expression: But we hope to give you in lieu of French graces and elegance, Germanick sincerity. Read us with the same indulgence wherewith we are in truth, &c. &c.

(1) *Your pretended useful note*. The utility of these notes will be shewn in the following letter, and how much they enrich the text. *Edit.*

(2) *Too great freedom*. Some of the following letters appeared at Amsterdam in 1765. We did not then know who was the true author of the *Treatise on Toleration*, and of the notes annexed to it. Mr. Voltaire has so often disowned those works, which are most unanimously ascribed to him; he borrows so many names, he assumes so many forms, Jew, Christian, Chaplain, Rabbi, Batchelor, Doctor, Uncle, Nephew, &c. that it is easy to be mistaken. *Quo teneam vultus mutantem protea nedo.* *Exit.*

(3) *The face of the old Man*. See Leviticus 19th chapt. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man*. This was a wise law, imitated by the Spartans, our brethren, and ancient allies, but too much forgotten in modern legislations. *Exit.*



## LETTER II.

*The Note of the Author of the ESSAY on TOLERATION, inserted at his 12th Article. It is quoted entire, and why. The Order to be followed in the Answer.*

THERE are too many writers, sir, who, in order to form an attack, or an apology to greater advantage, make false quotations without scruple, alter the text or give it a false sense, and thus father arguments on authors which they never drew. Far be from us such odious practices, which are the feeble and scandalous resources of desperate causes, and capable of giving a bad opinion of the best. To banish the slightest suspicion of this, we resolved without proceeding any further, to transcribe entirely that *note* which we proposed at first to confute. Thus it runs in every edition of your treatise that we could find.

“Several writers have rashly concluded from this  
 “(1) passage, that the chapter concerning the golden calf, (which is no other than the god Apis)  
 “has, as well as many other chapters, been added  
 “to the books of Moses.”

“Aben Ezra was the first who undertook to prove  
 “that the Pentateuch was compiled in the time of  
 “the kings, Volaston, Colins, Tindall, Shaftesbury, Bolinbrook, and (2) many others, have al-

(1) *This Passage.* It is the 8th verse of the 12th chap. of Deuteronomy. *When ye shall be in the land of Canaan, says Moses, ye shall not do after all the things than we do here this day every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.* We cannot perceive the direct relation this passage has to the adoration on the golden calf, nor the justness of those writers conclusion. Therefore Mr. Voltaire has perhaps more reason than he thinks, in calling this conclusion *rash*. And yet it is this conclusion which has brought on that heap of objections which he has gathered and tacked to his text, without enquiring whether they have any relation to the subject or not. *Edit*

(2) *And many others.* The author ought to have named them; he would have saved his readers the trouble of guessing at them. To quote in so vague a manner, is to tell the reader, search, if you chuse, and find if you can. We had considered whether these *many other writers* might be Spinoza, Hobbes, la Pereyre. (The weight of these authorities is great :) But perhaps we are mistaken. *Edit.*



“ ledged, that in those ages men had no other way of  
“ committing their thoughts to writing, but by en-  
“ graving them upon polished stone, brick, lead,  
“ or wood, and tell us that in the time of Moses,  
“ the Chaldeans and Egyptians had no other way  
“ of writing, and that then they could engrave  
“ only in a very abridged manner, and in hierogly-  
“ phicks, the substance of those things which they  
“ thought worthy of being transmitted to posterity  
“ and could never form regular histories : That it was  
“ impossible to engrave books of any considerable  
“ bulk in the wilderness, where they were continually  
“ changing their habitation, where they had no person  
“ to furnish them with cloathing, to make that  
“ cloathing for them, or even to mend their sandals,  
“ and where God was obliged to work a miracle  
“ during forty years, to preserve the garments of  
“ his people entire : They say that it is not likely  
“ that there should have been so many engravers  
“ among them, at the time that they were so defici-  
“ ent in the more necessary arts of life, and could not  
“ even get bread made ; and if we answer to this,  
“ that the pillars of the Tabernacle were of brass,  
“ and the chapters of massy silver, they reply, that  
“ the order for these was given in the wilderness,  
“ but that the execution of the order was put off to  
“ happier times.”

“ They cannot conceive they say how this poor  
“ nation could ask for a calf of massy gold to be  
“ erected for their adoration, at the foot of that very  
“ mountain where God was then conversing with  
“ Moses, and in the midst of the thunder and lightning,  
“ and the sound of the heavenly trumpet which were  
“ then heard and seen. They are astonished that it  
“ should have been only the day before Moses descend-  
“ ed from the mountain, that all this people should  
“ have applied to Aaron to get this calf of massy gold.  
“ How should Aaron cast such an image in one day ?  
“ How could Moses afterwards reduce it into pow-  
“ der ? They say that it is impossible for any artist  
“ to make a statue of gold in less than three months ;



“ and that all the efforts of chymistry are not suffi-  
“ ent to reduce it into potable powder ; consequently  
“ that the prevarication of Aaron, and this operation  
“ of Moses, must have been two miracles.

“ Deceived by the humanity and goodness of their  
“ hearts, they cannot believe that Moses slaughtered  
“ three and twenty thousand souls to expiate this  
“ crime : Or that so many men would have tamely  
“ suffered themselves to be murdered by Levites,  
“ without a third miracle. Lastly, they think it very  
“ extraordinary, that Aaron, who was the most guilt-  
“ ty of all, should have been rewarded for that very  
“ crime, for which the rest underwent so dreadful a  
“ punishment, by being appointed high-priest, whilst  
“ the bloody remains of his three and twenty thou-  
“ sand brethren, were heaped at the foot of that al-  
“ tar, on which he was going to sacrifice.

“ They start the same difficulties upon the twenty-  
“ four thousand Israelites who were slaughtered by  
“ order of Moses, to atone for the crime of a single  
“ one of them, who was surprized with a Madianite  
“ woman. And seeing that Solomon, and so many  
“ other Jewish kings, did without being punished for  
“ it, take to themselves strange wives, they cannot  
“ conceive what great crime there could be in an in-  
“ dividual making an alliance with a Madianite wo-  
“ man. Ruth was a Moabitess, tho’ her family was  
“ originally of Bethlehem ; the scripture always  
“ styles her, Ruth the Moabitess ; and yet she went  
“ and put herself in the bed of Booz, by her mo-  
“ ther’s advice, received six measures of barley  
“ from him, married him after, and was the grand-  
“ mother of David. Rahab was not only a stranger  
“ but a common prostitute : The Vulgate gives her  
“ no other title, but that of *Meretrix* : she married  
“ Salmon, from whom also David descended : This  
“ very Rahab is looked on as a figure of the Christian  
“ church, according to many of the fathers,  
“ and especially Origen, in his seventh Homily on  
“ Joshua.



“ Bethshabe the wife of Uriah, by whom David  
 “ had Solomon, was an Ethean. If we go farther  
 “ back, the patriarch Juda married a Canaanitefs :  
 “ His children had for wife, Tamar, of the race of  
 “ Aram : This woman, with whom Juda committed  
 “ an innocent incest, was not of the race of Israel.  
 “ Thus our Saviour Jesus Christ vouchsafes to  
 “ take upon him human flesh, in a family which  
 “ had five aliens for its stock, in order to shew  
 “ that the Gentiles were to partake of his inheri-  
 “ tance.

“ The Rabbin Aben Ezra, was (as we have said)  
 “ the first who ventured to affirm that the Penta-  
 “ teuch, was compiled a long time after Moses. He  
 “ quotes for authority several passages ; *The Cana-*  
 “ *anite then dwelt in that land. The mountain of*  
 “ *Moria, called the mountain of God. The bed of*  
 “ *Og, King of Basan, is still to be seen in Rabath.*  
 “ *And he called all the country of Basan, the villages*  
 “ *of Jair, until this day. Never was there seen a pro-*  
 “ *phet in Israel like Moses. These are the kings which*  
 “ *reigned in Edom before any king reigned over Israel.*  
 “ He pretends that those passages which speak of  
 “ things that happened after the time of Moses, could  
 “ not be written by Moses. To this it is answered,  
 “ that these passages are notes, added long after-  
 “ wards by transcribers.

“ Newton, whose name ought always to be pro-  
 “ nounced with respect, but who as a man may  
 “ have erred, in the introduction to his commen-  
 “ taries upon Daniel and St. John, ascribes the five  
 “ books of Moses, Joshua, and Judges, to sacred  
 “ writers of much later date. He founds his opi-  
 “ nion on the 36th chap. of Genesis, the 17th, 18th,  
 “ 19th, and 21st verses, of the 4th chap. of Judges,  
 “ the 8th chap. of Samuel, the 2d chap. of the 1st  
 “ book of Chronicles, and the 4th chap. of Ruth.  
 “ And indeed as in the 36th chap. of Genesis,  
 “ mention is made of the kings, and in the books  
 “ of the Judges ; as David is spoken of in the book



“ of Ruth it should seem that all these books were  
 “ compiled in the time of the kings. This is also the  
 “ opinion of several divines, at the head of whom is  
 “ the famous le Clerc : But this opinion has but a  
 “ small number of followers, who have curiosity  
 “ enough to sound these depths. This curiosity  
 “ makes certainly no part of the duties of man.  
 “ When the learned and unlearned, the prince and  
 “ the shepherd shall, after this short life, appear before  
 “ the master of eternity, every one of us then,  
 “ will wish to have been generous and humane, ge-  
 “ nerous and compassionate : And no one will pride  
 “ himself in having known exactly the year in which  
 “ the Pentateuch was written, or in having been  
 “ able to distinguish the true text from the notes, in  
 “ use among the scribes. God will not ask us, whe-  
 “ ther we have taken part with the Mavorites a-  
 “ gainst the Talmud ; whether we ever mistook a  
 “ *Caph* for a *Beth*, a *Yod* for a *Vau*, a *Daleth* for a  
 “ *Resh* : He will judge us according to our works,  
 “ and not according to our proficiency in the Hebrew  
 “ language. Therefore, agreeably to the reasonable  
 “ duty of a Christian, we shall firmly abide by the  
 “ decision of the church.”

“ Let us finish this note by a passage of Leviticus,  
 “ a book which was composed after the adoration  
 “ of the golden calf. He commands the Jews no  
 “ more to adore *the hairy things, the he-goats, with*  
 “ *whom they have committed infamous abomination.*  
 “ We cannot say whether this strange worship came  
 “ from Egypt, the native soil of sorcery and supersti-  
 “ tion, but there is reason to believe, that the custom  
 “ of our pretended magicians, of keeping a sabbath  
 “ for the adoration of a he-goat, and of abandoning  
 “ themselves to such detestable uncleanness as is  
 “ shocking to conceive, came from the ancient Jews,  
 “ who were the first who taught magick in a part of  
 “ Europe. What a people ! Such strange abomina-  
 “ tions seem to deserve a punishment equal to that,  
 “ which the golden calf drew down upon them :  
 “ And yet the legislator is satisfied, with given them



“ a simple prohibition. This fact was brought in  
 “ only to shew what the Jewish nation was: Besti-  
 “ ality must have been very common amongst them,  
 “ since it was the only nation known in which the  
 “ laws were obliged to prohibit a crime, which was  
 “ not even suspected in any other place by any  
 “ other legislator.

“ It is probable that in the fatigues and distresses  
 “ which the Jews underwent in the deserts of Paran,  
 “ Oreb, and Cadesh Barnea, the female sex,  
 “ which is always weaker than the male, failed.  
 “ The Jews must necessarily have wanted women,  
 “ since they are always commanded, when they take  
 “ any town or village, to the right or the left of the  
 “ lake Asphaltés, to kill every thing except marriage-  
 “ able women.

“ The Arabs, who still inhabit a part of those de-  
 “ serts, to this day stipulate in the treaties which  
 “ they make with the Caravans, that they shall be  
 “ supplied with marriageable women. It is probable  
 “ that young people, in those shocking countries,  
 “ corrupted human nature so far, as to have had  
 “ carnal commerce with goats, as the story is told  
 “ us of some shepherds in Calabria.

“ It is still uncertain, whether any monsters were  
 “ produced by this unnatural copulation, and whe-  
 “ ther there is any foundation in the ancient stories  
 “ of fauns, satyrs, centaurs, and minotaurs; his-  
 “ tory says there is, but natural philosophy has not  
 “ yet cleared up this monstrous account.”

You see, sir, that we do not intend to weaken your  
 difficulties; we quote them fully, and in your own  
 words. When a man's object is truth, he needs not  
 have recourse to art.

In order to answer methodically, we shall consider  
 first, upon what foundation the criticks you mention  
 maintain, as you say, that Moses could not be the  
 author of (1) the Pentateuch. To this we shall add

(1) *The Pentateuch.* Mr. Voltaire says, in the text of the treatise on toleration, that it is very needless to confute those who think, that the *Pentateuch* was not written by Moses. But it is needless to confute them, what use could there be in filling up his note with their objections? To shew the difficulties, and conceal the answers, is not acting with honour. *Aut.*



some reflexions on different parts of your other works, where you contradict your criticks and yourself, with regard to the characters and substances which were used for writing in the time of the Jewish legislator.

We shall go from thence to the facts which your criticks call in question, and shall examine whether the adoration of the golden calf, the construction of the tabernacle near mount Sinai, and the massacre of twenty-four thousand men, seduced by the women of Moab, can be looked on only as *absurd stories, which have been added to the books of Moses*.

We shall enquire thirdly, into the credit of those authorities by which you support your cause, and whether it be true, that all those learned men you mention, have maintained those opinions and arguments (1) you ascribe to them.

This, sir, is the plan which we have laid down for ourselves, and the plan which we intend to follow in the first part of our letters. Weigh our arguments, and if you find them convincing, as we hope, correct in your new edition the errors which have escaped you, with respect to these different objects. Give the public this proof that *you love the truth, and that* (as you say) *you prefer it to all things*. We are, with that regard and admiration, which your talents deserve, &c.

(1) *You ascribe to them*. Lord preserve us from doubting Mr. Voltaire's sincerity! We only think that in compiling those objections he may have confounded the names of the authors from whom he was copying.



## LETTER III.

*Whether it was impossible for Moses to write the Pentateuch. Examination of the Reasons alledged in the (1) Note.*

**I**F, in speaking of the Pentateuch, Collins, Tindall, and others, had been satisfied with advancing that this work, such as we have it, is not entirely of Moses; that many places may be observed in it which seem to have been added by more recent hands; or even that these books were not compiled 'till after the legislator's death, by the help of regular tradition and authentick memorials: They would have said no more than what many learned men, both Jews and Christians, have believed; yet this belief never invalidated the orthodoxy of those books, either in our synagogue, or your (2) church.

But your (3) writers, sir, do not confine themselves within these limits: These bold criticks attempt to prove not only that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, but *that it was impossible for him to write it in the circumstances he was in.*

(1) *Alledged in the note.* It is not our intent here to prove that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch: Many others have done it, and in a convincing manner. See what Abbadie, Dupin, and others, have said on this subject. We suppose this point proved, and we confine ourselves merely to answer the difficulties proposed in the note. *Aut.*

(2) *Your church.* That Moses wrote the Pentateuch is a fact, supported by such solid proofs, that no reasonable person can doubt it: And yet it is not *an article of faith.* Therefore the celebrated author of the philosophical dictionary, that famous book, is mistaken, when he says (in the article, Moses) *that the church has decided that the Pentateuch was written by the legislator.* The learned Christian is but ill-informed in the article of his religion. Must Jews be obliged to instruct him in it?

Whether the Pentateuch was written by Moses, in the form in which we have it now, or whether succeeding prophets have added short notes to it. &c. &c. these are merely critical disquisitions, which affect not the grounds of religion. The facts which support the truth of this revelation, drawn from authentick memorials, supported by a tradition, which goes back as far as the origin of the Jewish nation, engraved in indelible characters in their civil and religious rites: These facts, I say, are not the less clear and incontestible, notwithstanding this doubt. *Aut.*

(3) *Your writers.* We shall shew hereafter who are the writers whose authority Mr. Voltaire can challenge. *Edit.*



The nature of those substances on which they engraved their compositions at that time; the characters used in writing, lastly, the state of misery of the Jews in the wilderness. These are the three reasons, sir, which they alledge. Let us enquire into their solidity.

§ I. *Whether the nature of those substances, on which they engraved writing in the time of Moses, could prevent him from writing the Pentateuch.*

*In those ages men had no other way of committing their thoughts to writing, but by engraving them upon polished stone, brick, lead, or wood, say these criticks, and in the time of Moses the Egyptians and Chaldeans had no other way of writing.* Therefore Moses could not write the five books which are ascribed to him.

Do you call this sound reasoning, sir? As for our parts, we can see nothing in it but a conclusion ill-drawn from a very uncertain principle: The principle is uncertain, for what proofs can these criticks give of it? Have they secret memoirs which they have read, and to which the whole body of the learned are strangers?

*Men had then no other way of committing their thoughts to writing, but by engraving them upon polished stone, &c. &c.* Where men at that time ignorant or neglectful of the art of painting their thoughts? What! Had they already invented tools of brass or steel to engrave their thoughts, altho' in order to forge iron, or to supply something in lieu of it (1), according to you, so many lucky chances must have met, so much industry, so many ages, that it is hard to conceive how men at last accomplished it: And they had not yet found out colours for painting their conceptions, which nature continually throws in their way! *There are amongst us Egyptian mummies (2) 4000 years old:*

(1) *According to you. See the Philosophy of History, (Article Chaldeans.)* And yet the illustrious author thinks that writing was engraved on stone, and on metals before it was chalked or painted! And it is upon this principle he grounds his opinion that it was impossible for Moses to write the Pentateuch. *Edit.*

(2) *4000 Years old. See ibidem, article, of Egyptian monuments. Edit.*



Are your critics sure that none of those which we find surrounded with linen bands, stained with painted hieroglyphicks, are of those times?

*A child and a child of no great ingenuity, when he cannot make himself understood, will think of delineating the object he wants with a coal; from hence to the invention of more lasting colours there is (1) but a step.* And did the Chaldeans never make this step? This (2) ancient people, who was so learned that they calculated eclipses at the time of the flood, from that time until the days of Moses, never could find out what the Chinese and the Mexicans found out in the infancy of their empire, what the savages of America have been acquainted with, in short, what would come into the mind of a child?

Even supposing that men did not yet know the use of colours for writing, or did not practise it, by what authority do those criticks confine the substances on which writing might be engraved, to stone, wood, or metals? What reason have they to doubt that in Egypt it was engraved on the inside bark of certain trees? And upon the leaves of the palm-tree? As has been long practised in the Indies and in China.

But 'tis too little to say that their principle is uncertain, I shall add that the contrary is no way doubtful; and it is not I, but the learned count de Caylus who will inform you.

(1) *But a step.* See *Philosophy of History*, Article of the language of the Egyptians and of their symbols. *Edit.*

(2) *Ancient people who was so learned.* In the *Philosophy of History*, (Article, Chaldeans) Mr. Voltaire struggles to prove that the antiquity of this people went farther back than the flood: He almost adopts the calculation of 470,000 years which they gave themselves. But is it not evident that the farther he throws back the origin of the Chaldeans, and the antiquity of the neighbouring people, the more unlikely it is that these ancient nations had not yet found out the art of painting their conceptions in the time of Moses?

The illustrious author, in order to give an high idea of the learning and antiquity of the Chinese, says, in the same work, that *the Chinese used to write on tablets of Bamboo, whilst the Chaldeans wrote on nothing but brick.* Does this learned man think that because the Chaldeans knew how to write on brick, they therefore never wrote on any thing else? Or that it is easier to write on brick than upon tablets of bamboo, with the point of a bone or of some hard wood? *Edit.*



“ It is clear, says (1) he, that as soon as writing  
 “ was found out, it was laid on every thing that  
 “ could receive it.” Therefore the first writers  
 wrote not only on stone, metals, or wood, but *upon*  
*every thing that could receive writing.* This is the  
 dictate of reason, improved by an acquaintance with  
 the arts, and which no man of good sense will deny,  
 if some private interest does not sway him to main-  
 tain the contrary. “ The substances, adds the illuf-  
 “ trious academician, have varied according to  
 “ times and countries. It may however be affirm-  
 “ ed that the most common substance, and the light-  
 “ est for carriage, claimed the preference in a thing  
 “ so necessary.” Without doubt all nations would  
 have preferred such substances. But by a whim in-  
 conceivable in any other country, the Egyptians and  
 Chaldeans, precisely in the time of Moses, did quite  
 the contrary. This wise people preferred substan-  
 ces, so uncommon, so hard, and so difficult of car-  
 riage, that it is past conception, how any work of  
 moderate length could have been written on them !

But further, even suppose your principle as true  
 as it is false : Suppose it was an incontestible fact,  
 that *in the time of Moses, the only manner of writing*  
*was to engrave our thoughts on polished stone, brick, lead*  
*or wood,* would it follow from this that Moses could  
 not be the author of the Pentateuch ? We allow  
 that it would have been difficult to engrave it on po-  
 lished stone or on burned bricks : But what impossi-  
 bility metaphysical, physical or moral, could there  
 be in his engraving it on soft brick, or if that was  
 inconvenient, on lead, and if lead failed, on wood ?

§ II. *Whether the characters used in the time of*  
*Moses, could prevent him from writing the Pentateuch.*

*In the time of Moses, say those learned criticks,*  
*they had no other way of writing but in hieroglyphicks,*  
*and therefore they could only write the substance of those*  
*things, which they thought worthy of being transmitted*

(1) Says he. See the memoirs of the academy of belles lettres. *Ant.*



*to posterity and could never form regular histories in detail.*

But first, is it very certain that in the time of Moses, the only method of writing was hieroglyphical? The singularity of an opinion is not a title which dispenses the proposer from adducing proofs: Where are the proofs of your writers?

We have some proofs on the contrary, and I think good ones, that even the alphabetical characters were known. Such are the novelty of your opinion, and the antiquity of our's: This is a kind of possession which is valid against vague conjectures and groundless assertions. There is an improbability in your system, that Moses, who according to you wrote at least *his chief laws* and the most interesting events in the history of his people, should have done it in hieroglyphicks, which are made up mostly of the figures of men and animals. He according to you, had (1) forbid the *engraving any figure*, and must as other learned men say, have known that the abuse of those characters had been one of the sources of Egyptian idolatry. And lastly, it is improbable that characters very different from those which were employed by the legislator and consecrated by God himself, should have been substituted in the place of these latter, without the least trace of this remarkable change having been left, in our writings or our tradition.

To these proofs, which relate immediately to us, add the testimony even of prophane history. This informs us that almost all nations have looked on the invention of letters as of the most remote antiquity; that the Assyrians and Chaldeans thought them as ancient as their empire; that the Egyptians pretended their Thor, or some of his children, were the in-

(1) *Had forbid the engraving, &c.* See the Philosophy of History. Mr. Voltaire goes still farther in another place, he assures us in express terms that it was forbidden by the second article of the Hebrew law to write in hieroglyphicks. Either then, Moses did not write his principal laws, which is contrary not only to the united suffrages of all antiquity, sacred and prophane, but also to the very affirmation of Mr. Voltaire; or he wrote them in alphabetical characters, which is a formal contradiction to the opinion of the learned men quoted in Mr. Voltaire's note. *Edit.*



ventors of them ; *they*, says the celebrated (1) Warburton, *who never ascribed the invention of any thing to their Gods of which they knew the origin* ; that these people, in all whose sciences Moses was instructed, had a political and a sacerdotal alphabet, even in the times of their ancient kings ; that Cecrops and Cadmus, one of whom is supposed to have lived before the Jewish legislator, and the other to have been his cotemporary, conveyed even then the knowledge of alphabetical characters into Greece, &c. &c.

All those traditions concerning the antiquity of letters, traditions so ancient, so universal, and which agree so well with our sacred writings, must certainly have had some foundation, and deserve some credit, if not in every minute particular, yet in substance. Even the uncertainty and variety of opinions on this discovery, and the difficulty, or rather impossibility, notwithstanding all the researches of the learned, of assigning a period to it, shew incontestably that it runs back to the most distant ages. Are not these reasons, sir, plausible enough, against an assertion which is destitute of proofs ?

Therefore it is not certain that in the time of Moses, the only way of writing was hieroglyphical. We shall now proceed to shew that the following point is not more clear, viz. That with the help of hieroglyphicks he could not have wrote the Pentateuch.

We shall begin by observing that the characters of representative and hieroglyphical writing underwent successively divers changes. First, objects, such as they were seen in nature, were painted in a clumsy way, and this was probably the first manner of writing of the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Chinese, &c. &c. and this is still the manner of some American nations. Afterwards these objects were no longer painted in full, they just drew the contour of some of their principal parts. And lastly, they

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(1) Warburton. This learned man maintains that the Egyptian hieroglyphicks did not become sacred till after the invention of letters, and that they were sacred in the time of Josephus. *Edit.*



confined themselves to those lines which were the fittest for describing them. Such is still the writing of the Chinese, as the learned tell us; and it seems to have been that of most nations, until, by an happy effort of genius, men thought of describing no longer the objects, but the signs of their conceptions, that is, the words which recall them to our minds.

Let us now suppose, what you have in no wise proved, that Moses really knew none but the hieroglyphical characters of the first sort, was it impossible for him to write, by the help of them, such a history as the Pentateuch, which is an abridgement, and confined to things necessary? The Mexicans were not acquainted with any other representative kind of writing but the first; and yet they had (1) their history, which ran from the time they entered that country, until the Europeans came and conquered them, and this history comprehended their laws, the regulations of their police, the particulars of their government, &c. &c. And why could not the Hebrew legislator write such an history with the same characters?

Now if it was not impossible to have regular histories, and of a certain length, with the first kind of representative writing, was it not still much less so with the second kind, and still less again with the third; that is, the running hieroglyphicks? Have not the Chinese regular histories in detail? And yet their writing, as we have shewn, is in the third hieroglyphical manner, or comes very (2) near to it. Now what proofs can your critics produce to wesh that Moses did not know the second, or even the third kind of hieroglyphical writing?

(1) *Their history.* Some fragments of those histories are still preserved. But the greatest part of those precious monuments were destroyed by the conquering Spaniards, who took them for books of magic. See the memoirs of the academy of belles lettres. *ut.*

(2) *Or comes very near to it.* See *ibid.* a very learned treatise of Mr. de Guignes, on the writing of the Chinese. *Idem.*



Therefore, even supposing that in the time of Moses hieroglyphical characters were used, and alphabetical ones unknown, it was not impossible for him to write the Pentateuch.

In short, sir, no matter what characters they used, or what substances they wrote on, by your own account (*in the defence of my uncle*) "every nation of Palestine had its particular history, when the Jews went into that country." And why then could not Moses have wrote his history in the space of forty years?

§ 3. *Whether the state of the Israelites, in the wilderness, could have prevented Moses from writing the Pentateuch?*

Here your critics triumph! It was impossible, say they, *to engrave large books in the wilderness, where there was a want of every thing, &c. &c.*

Yes, large books; books of twelve or fifteen volumes in folio, such as we see in libraries, the Encyclopedie, for instance, or some other work of like bulk. But in comparison of this, sir, the Pentateuch is a small book.

Why do I say the Pentateuch? It would be proper, perhaps, to except the whole book of Genesis, for you are not certain that Moses did not write it before he left Egypt. At least Deuteronomy must be excepted, which was not written in the (1) wilderness.

You say (2) somewhere, that Joshua caused this last book to be engraved on stone. Now Deuteronomy is about the fifth part of the Pentateuch; why could not Moses get the remainder of it engraved in the same manner? The whole difficulty consisted in laying out on it quadruple the space of time.

(1) *In the wilderness.* It may be supposed that Deuteronomy, except the last chapter, was written by Moses a short time before his death, near the borders of the Jordan, a fertile well-inhabited country, where afterwards two tribes and an half chose to take up their residence. *Transf.*

(2) *Somewhere.* We reason here only from the concession of Mr. Voltaire; for in reality it is probable, that by *the words of the law* which Joshua caused to be engraved on stone, we are now to understand the whole book of Deuteronomy but only the two chapters of blessings and curses; or perhaps the ten commandments. *Somewhere. See a letter of a Quaker. Aut.*



But, say your critics, here precisely lies the difficulty: *How could so much time be spared in the wilderness, where they so often changed their dwellings?* Not so often, sir, these changes are pretty well known, and they were not by many degrees so frequent as you think. The course of the Israelites is marked out in the books of Moses: Let us give them, if you please, ten years to accomplish it. This is a great deal, and probably (1) too much. There will yet remain thirty years for their residence. Do you think that in thirty years they could not engrave, even upon stone, three or four books as short as those of the law?

But *where could they find so many engravers in the wilderness, where they had no person to furnish them with cloathing, to make that cloathing for them, or even to mend their sandals; where they were so deficient in the most necessary arts of life, and could not even get bread made.*

So many engravers, sir! And were so many necessary? Would not a dozen suffice to engrave in thirty years, and even upon stone, and in hieroglyphicks three or four books of the Pentateuch? But if they were engraved only on wood, as your writers agree might have been the case, and in alphabetical characters, as is very probable, how much less time and fewer engravers would have been required.

“*In a wilderness where they were deficient in the most necessary arts, and could not even get (2) bread made.*”

(1) *Probably too much.* The sum total of the different marches of the Israelites, in the wilderness, amounts to little more than four hundred and fifty leagues, which they could easily accomplish by easy journies in less than ten years. *Aut.*

(2) *Get bread made.* Admire the solidity of the following argument: “The Israelites in the wilderness, for want of bread lived on manna; therefore they had lost the art of baking: They were deficient in leather and stuffs; therefore they had neither shoe-makers nor taylors; therefore they had lost their engravers, and the art of engraving; therefore Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch.” Is not this reasoning truly philosophical? Suppose I said, “The Hebrews, who had no bakers in the wilderness, had probably no cooks; therefore when quails fell into their camp, they fell ready roasted, or they eat them raw; therefore they roasted Agag, and fed on human flesh.” This would be a feeble imitation of this noble logick. *Aut.*



But why could they not make bread? Was it because the art of making bread was lost, and that bakers were wanting? Not at all, but because meal was wanting. The same thing may be affirmed of the other arts which you mention. Neither shoemakers, nor taylor's were wanting, but leather and stuff. That is, if we suppose they were really wanting. The materials had been consumed, but the arts and artists remained. And why did no engravers remain, these so necessary artists, at least according to your hypothesis? There is the less reason to suppose a deficiency of them, because probably neither wood nor stones could be wanting for engraving, altho' stuff might be wanting to make cloaths, and leather to mend sandals.

Besides, if Moses had no more engravers, how could Joshua find any? Do you think that he brought some from the kingdoms of Og and Sehon, or that he sent the Israelites to learn to engrave in the cities of Hai and Jericho?

Observe lastly that the law, or at least, the greatest part of it, was written near mount Sinai, where God gave it to Moses in parts, ordering him at each time, to go and write down the given portion. Now the Israelites arrived at mount Sinai, forty-eight days after their going out of Egypt. Is it probable that in so short a time, they lost all their engravers? And if there was a mortality among the people, why do you make it fall on those artists in particular? What! was there not one or two of them left, who whilst the Hebrews sojourned at the foot of this mountain, could have formed disciples? No, masters and scholars, they must all die! Alas, sir, this is very hard, to be obliged to kill so many men, in order to get rid of one difficulty! Trust me, let us rather permit them to live, and let us agree in this point, that the Israelites, in the wilderness had not lost their arts, nor their artists; this is the most natural and probable supposition.

Moses therefore did not want engravers of cha-



acters in the wilderness: Nor did he want stone, wood, or time for engraving. Therefore, even according to the false hypotheses of your writers, the sojourning of the Hebrews in the wilderness, was not an obstacle which could prevent Moses from writing the Pentateuch.

Thus sir, none of the reasons alledged by your critics prove the impossibility they pretended to demonstrate. This impossibility is a chimera, their principles are false suppositions, and their arguments inconclusive.

That we should find such arguments in (1) Collins and Tindall, is not surprizing. The characters of those writers, is well known. But that such a man as you, should deign to transcribe them, that you should demean yourself so far, as to tack such vile patches to your text, that you should lay them coolly before your readers as useful observations, is not to be conceived.

We have the most tender regard, sir, for your character. We do not think that the arguments now confuted, whether you are the author, or only the copier of them, can ever contribute to raise the glory of it. We therefore think that it would be better for you to omit them in your new edition.

We remain, with respect,

Yours, &c.

(1) *In Collins and Tindall.* We ascribe them to those critics, merely on the authority of Mr. Voltaire who sometimes errs. Perhaps he has borrowed them from other writers, less learned and less faithful. *Aut.*



## L E T T E R IV.

*In which enquiry is made into the illustrious author's private opinions, upon the characters and substances which were used for writing, in the time of Moses. Variations and contradictions of the learned writer on these two objects.*

“Tel est l'homme en effect, il va du blanc au noir,  
“ Et condamne au matin ses sentimens du soir.”

**T**HE art with which your note is written, sir, and the interest which you seem to take in the subject, gave us room to think that none of the opinions which you had laid down, and which you ascribed to your most learned critics, was indifferent to you. We were convinced, more especially, that you had adopted their opinions upon the characters and the substances which were used in writing, at the time of our legislator. But just as our letter was finished, five or six new tracts were put into our hands, in which you speak of the characters and substances that were used for writing, in the time of Moses. We immediately perused them, and compared them with one another, and also with your other works, in hopes of finding in them fresh information, or of learning at least what are your particular sentiments on these two objects.

Perhaps we are mistaken, sir, but the result of this comparison seems to be, that you have no fixed principles or determinate opinion on these matters at all, as is your case, on many others. You agree with those writers in some places, and contradict them in others, nay you contradict yourself in the plainest manner, still shifting from one opinion to another, according as caprice or the prejudice of the moment (1) hurries you away. This we shall shew you in the following letter.

(1) *Hurries you away.* Is he not hurried away rather by necessity? It appears plainly that Mr. Voltaire, who is at the bottom indifferent to all opi-



§ 1 *Mr. Voltaire's contradictions with regard to the characters which were used for writing in the time of Moses.*

We have seen above that you make your critics say in your note, that alphabetical characters were not known in the time of Moses; that the only method was hieroglyphical, that the Chaldeans, Phenicians, and Egyptians wrote no other way. You say expressly in your *Philosophy of History*, that the Chaldeans, who were instructed, according to you, in this art before the Phenicians and Egyptians, engraved for a long time, their observations and their laws in hieroglyphicks, and that it was very late before they were acquainted with alphabetical characters.

Now this is what we read in your *Diatribes de l'Abbé Bazin*, “ Sanchoniatho lived about the time  
“ in which we place the last years of Moses. This  
“ Phenician author expressly owns, that he took  
“ part of his history from the writings of Thor, who  
“ lived eight hundred years before him. This con-  
“ fession, which is not sufficiently attended to, is one  
“ of the most curious testimonies that antiquity has  
“ transmitted to us. It proves that eight hundred  
“ years had elapsed, since they had books written by  
“ help of the alphabet: That nations could understand  
“ each other by means of (1) this, and reciprocally  
“ translate the works of each other: The Chaldeans  
“ the Syrians, the Phenicians, the Egyptians, the  
“ Indians, the Persians, had necessarily a mutual  
“ communication, and alphabetical writing must  
“ have facilitated this communication.”

What! Sir, *In the time of Moses alphabetical cha-*

nions, changes principles as colours change colours, according to the enemy from whom they want to escape, or whom they wish to surprize. This manœuvre may be useful, but does it become a learned man? Is this *searching for the truth, and not for vain disputation.* Edit.

(1) *By means of this.* The confession of Sanchoniatho, does not at all prove what Mr. Voltaire infers. It was not necessary that those books of Thor, should have been written in alphabetical characters to enable Sanchoniatho to take part of his history from them. Sanchoniatho perhaps understood hieroglyphical writing, or he might have got it explained to him by the Egyptian priests. Edit.



characters were not known : They wrote only in hieroglyphicks : The Phenicians and the Egyptians did not write otherwise. And Sanchoniatho the Phenician, the cotemporary of Moses, if he did not live before him, wrote in alphabetical characters ; and eight hundred years before him, they had in Egypt books written by the help of the alphabet, and even then nations could understand and communicate with each other by means of this. Can there be more palpable contradictions ?

But here follow some others of the same stamp. You say in your *Philosophy of History*, (article Phenicians,) “ That all the remains we have of ancient monuments, inform us, that Sanchoniatho lived nearly at the same time with Moses.” And you add a little lower, that his book (which if we believe you, was written in alphabetical characters,) “ is of prodigious antiquity.” Here then alphabetical characters, which were according to you, a very late invention, even among the most learned ancient nations, are now become of *prodigious antiquity* : And the legislator of late date of the Jewish nation, which according to you is of very late date also, is now according to you, *the cotemporary of an author of prodigious antiquity* ! Can these assertions be easily reconciled with each other ?

§ 2. That he contradicts again his writers and himself, with regard to the substances which were used for writing in the time of Moses.

You are not in a better state of agreement with your writers, or more consistent with yourself, in speaking of the substances which were used for writing, in the time of the Jewish legislator. You assure us in your *Philosophy of History*, that before hieroglyphicks, men painted their conceptions in a clumsy manner. Therefore colours were used and employed then. And according to your writers, in the time of Moses, that is, in the time of hieroglyphicks, colours were not used. The only manner of writing, was to engrave ones thoughts on stone, lead, and wood.



This is not all: According to your criticks, people wrote on *stone, brick, metals and wood*. You say likewise, (Philosophy of History,) that the Chaldeans engraved their observations on *brick*, and that the Egyptians engraved their writing on *marble and wood*. Therefore, if we believe you and your criticks, stone was not *the only substance on which they then wrote*: But if we believe you, in your letters from a Quaker, to bishop Georges, and in other places, *they wrote on nothing then but stone*. These appear to us (1) palpable contradictions.

§ 3. *Reflections on the Quaker's opinion; its absurdity.*

Let us stop a moment to consider the extraordinary pretensions of the Quaker, who is the interpreter of your thoughts.

"You ought not to be ignorant (says he to (2) the bishop, with the most dogmatick air,) "that  
"they then wrote on nothing but (3) stone.

"*You ought not to be ignorant.*" "We may be ignorant of this without failing in any duty. An absurd opinion is not a piece of knowledge which we are under an obligation of acquiring.

"*That they wrote on nothing but stone.*" I might as well say that the Jews hewed nothing but the granite stone, and built nothing but the pyramids. Do arts begin by their most difficult parts? Is this fir, their usual progress?

(1) *Palpable contradictions.* What matter? altho' contradictions are disagreeable to some readers, yet they are very useful to some writers. They reap this advantage at least from them, that they must necessarily be in the right, either when they deny or when they affirm. *Ant.*

(2) *The bishop.* We know their prelate only by his writings: But we think that the Quaker, notwithstanding his pompous parade of English erudition, might be sent to school, and there be profitably instructed on more subjects than one. *Edit.*

(3) *Nothing but stone.* Mr. Voltaire, assures likewise in another place, (defence of my uncle,) that the *Vedam*, according to him, *one of the three most ancient books in the world, was written on stone, and in hieroglyphical characters.* We must probably say the same of the book of Job, which many learned men, says he, *have thought with good reason, prior to Moses, by seven generations.* But, besides that books written upon stone, will always look rather incredible, is there not some want of just inference in admitting books written on stone, and then denying that Moses could, in the space of more than thirty years, get the Pentateuch written upon stone? *Ant.*



But let us listen to this primitive man, and see his proofs. "They wrote on nothing but stone, says he, because it is said in the book of Joshua, that he wrote Deuteronomy upon stones." Very well: Suppose we were to say, the treaty which was made some years ago, between the Russians and the Chinese, upon the frontiers of both empires, was there written on stone: 'Therefore, some years ago, the Russians wrote on nothing but stone, and the Chinese knew not the use of ink or paper. Would you find this reasoning very just? Yet this is the way your Quaker reasons: He suddenly draws a conclusion from the particular to the universal: This truly is the argument of a poet or a (1) Quaker.

From what the Scripture observes, that the Decalogue, and according to him, Deuteronomy were written upon stone, he infers that they wrote on nothing else: He should have drawn I think, a quite contrary inference from this. In fact would the Scripture have observed, that the Decalogue and Deuteronomy, or rather a part of Deuteronomy, were written on stone, if they had then no other way of writing? And why, as writing is so often mentioned in the Pentateuch, is the writing on stone, mentioned only in these two places? Lastly, when Joshua, according to the Quaker, caused Deuteronomy to be written on stone by his engravers, it must be granted, that either he had the patience to dictate it to them *vivâ você*, which is past belief, or that he gave it to them written on a different substance, otherwise the engravers would have had a (2) double employment; therefore they wrote on other substances besides stone.

If in the time of Moses, they wrote on nothing but stone, the city of Cariat Sepher of which, by the way, you are pleased to make a country, must have

(1) *A poet or a Quaker.* There are poets who reason well, and Quakers full of sense, always excepting in matters of religion. *Edit.*

(2) *Double employment.* It is evident that the workmen, must have had under their eyes, models of what they were to engrave, more especially if they were to engrave books, or some work of length: And it is no less evident, that these models, could not have been engraven on stone. *Edit.*



been a noble magazine of stones, if the Canaanites wrote at all, for it was according to you, *the place where the records of the nation were kept, when the Hebrews entered Palestine*: The book of accounts of the merchants of Tyre, who no doubt (1) wrote much, were great heaps of stones; and the leaves of Sanchoniatho's book, so many polished stones; and when the kings of Egypt delivered to their courtiers, those letters of state which gave birth to the epistolary kind of writing, they loaded them with stones; and the Egyptian priests carried stones, when they perambulated their cities in procession, bearing the numerous books of their Thot! Your Quaker swallows all these absurdities. In truth, sir, is he in earnest, or is he playing upon the ignorance of his readers?

It is, however, certain that at that time, they did write upon stone: But what did they write on it? Public memorials, says the learned count de Caylus. Then, as well as now, they were engraved on stone, or brass, as they were intended to resist the injuries of weather, and the duration of time. But as for every thing else, it was written as at this day, upon every substance that could receive writing.

You will think perhaps sir, that we have dwelt too long upon an opinion of such palpable absurdity. We would have suppressed all we have said of it, had we found it only in the Quaker's letter. But we see traces of it, in your most (2) serious compositions, when you make some great men say these words, "*that the histories, and the laws of Moses and of Joshua, would have been engraved on stone* (3) *if in*

(1) *Wrote much.* Certainly, as Mr. Voltaire observes in his *Defence de mon Oncle*, "if the sciences were then cultivated in the little city of Dabir, in how much request must they have been in Sidon, and in Tyre, which were called the country of books, the country of records." *Aut.*

We know that the city of Dabir, was called *the country of books, the country of records*, but we never heard that these names, had been given to the cities of Tyre and Sidon. This is an anecdote which the learned critic vouchsafes to supply us with: We sincerely thank him for it: We could wish however, that he would inform us where he found it. *Edit.*

(2) *Serious composition.* See the *Philosophy of History*, (article *Moses*) *Aut.*

(3) *If in reality they had ever existed.* Thus Mr. Voltaire, in his *Philosophy*



“*reality they had ever existed.*” This opinion is found again in other tracts, and it has made its appearance lately in the work of a writer, who is in other respects well informed: so spreading is the most improbable error, when a celebrated author has given it authority! This determined us to speak of it more amply, than we intended at first to have done.

§ IV. *On the reproach of want of just inference, and of contradictions, which Mr. Voltaire, casts on the author of Emilius.*

Let us return. You laugh at the false reasoning, and the contradictions of poor Jean Jacques. It must be allowed, that they are pretty frequent. But has not poor Jean Jacques, some right to laugh at yours in his turn? And if this little man, had a mind to point them out to the publick, could he not amuse the world (1) at your expence? Beware of this, sir, *loripidem rectus derideat Æthiopem albus.*

No, you have no right to charge any one with false reasonings and contradictions, after all those we have set forth, and many others which we meet with every instant in your work.

Do those innumerable contradictions, and conti-

phy of History, (art. of Moses.) makes Aben, Ezra, Nugnez, Maimonides, the learned le Clerc, Middleton, those learned men known under the appellation of Dutch divines, and even the great Newton, reason. But this reasoning is not theirs: The philosopher might have spared them the honour of it. What right has he to make these great men say a silly thing? *Aut.*

We may observe here again, as well as in the note, that he carefully distinguishes the learned le Clerc, from those learned men known under the appellation of Dutch divines. Does the illustrious writer forget that le Clerc, with one, or at most two of his friends, was the author of a book called, *Opinions of certain Dutch divines?* Or does he want to persuade his readers, that these divines formed a considerable learned body, to which le Clerc did not belong, and that by consequence he is to be named by himself? This would be a very easy method of multiplying authorities, but probably it would not meet with general approbation.

*Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?* This it seems is the maxim of some modern writers. But altho' it may be sometimes useful, it is never honourable; and the advantages which it procures are of short duration. *Edit.*

(1) *At your expence.* We do not aim here at sowing division in the enemy's camp. There is too much of it there already, to the great scandal of philosophy. However, if the citizen of Geneva was by chance to review some of the treatises of the learned critic, he would be, no doubt, a more formidable adversary than a company of unfortunate Jews, who may be securely despised, and trodden under foot. *Aut.*



nual variations, evidence a writer who is master of his subject? A man of truth, who advances nothing of which he is not certain? A well-informed, faithful guide, who may be entrusted to shew the way without reservation? Or do they evidence a superficial understanding which, never having gone to the bottom of any thing, turns about with every wind of opinion? Which, holding truth and falshood as indifferent, aims at nothing but to distinguish itself from others, by attacking facts which they respect? And which, in order to accomplish this end, compiles heavily not only the most absurd, but the most contradictory opinions; as if the author was making a sportive trial to see how far public credulity, and the blind deference of his votaries to all his dictates, would go. These, sir, are the judgments which we fear for your writings, and which we could wish you would prevent, by adhering a little more to truth and consistency in treating those subjects which we have now spoke of, and shall speak of hereafter.

We remain, with the highest sentiments of sincerity and respect, &c.



## L E T T E R V.

*Where the objections in Mr. VOLTAIRE'S note against the history of the adoration of the golden calf are answered.*

AFTER having ineffectually opposed to the general opinion of Jews and Christians, who believe Moses to be the author of the Pentateuch, the pretended impossibility he was in of writing it, you pass from this general and external objection to those particular difficulties which you draw from the very grounds of the work; you dwell upon some facts which are related in it, and you represent them, after your criticisms, as false, impossible, and absurd.

Here, sir, the question changes, and becomes much more interesting. You have apprized your readers of it. Whether Moses could, or could not, write the Pentateuch; whether he wrote it in such a form as we have it now, or whether the public scribes and prophets made some slight additions to it; these are merely points of criticism on which every one is at liberty to hold that opinion which he thinks best; his attachment to either side can be of no great consequence. But if many of the principal facts, related in those books, are evidently false and incredible, the work is unworthy of Moses, or of any other writer, directed by the Spirit of God. To prove such a falsehood would at once destroy the authenticity and inspiration of those books which have been respected for so many ages. This object your writers have probably in view, who, by turning facts their own way, and artfully altering circumstances, strive to give them an air of improbability and absurdity that may shock the readers.

The adoration of the golden calf is one of those facts which they have attacked with the greatest vigour. This fact appears to them in itself impossible, in its circumstances inconceivable, and full of in-



justice and cruelty in all its consequences. From whence they conclude *that this whole chapter has been added to the books of Moses, as well as many others.*

We shall now set forth those difficulties, and endeavour to answer them. We shall take the liberty of inverting the order of them; but, however, we shall conceal none of them.

§ 1. *Whether chymistry, in its highest stage of perfection, can reduce gold into potable powder.*

If we are to believe those writers, *it is impossible to reduce gold into potable powder, and the art of chymistry (1) in its highest stage of perfection, could not effect this.*

Are they very certain of what they advance? Or, if they have no certainty of it, why do they decide so boldly?

I shall not quote here our chymists. You cannot but know that the Hebrews have always had eminent skill in this way, and that great kings have often deigned to employ the sons of Abraham to cast their metals. No, your own Christians shall confound this baptized incredulous race.

Stahl was a Christian and a chymist of the first rank, yet he did not reason as they do. He did not say, I know not how this dissolution can be effected, therefore it is impossible; therefore the Jewish legislature has told us an absurd story, or *this story has been added to his works, as many others have been.* He was more ingenious and less presumptuous than you. He rightly judged that an ancient author, and the most ancient we know, an author looked

(1) *In its highest stage.* In the Philosophical Dictionary (art. Moses) no more is said than that it was impossible for common chymistry, not then invented, to effect this operation. We do not exactly know the limits of what the author thinks proper to call, common chymistry. But we know that even the Epyptians worked mines of gold and silver, that they understood that most difficult branch of working pewter, that they had the art of refining those metals, that they embalmed dead bodies with chymical preparations, which have preserved them until our days, &c. &c. And therefore that a chymistry, or chymical operations *pretty learned* had been found out.

We may observe besides how the Dictionary and the treatise on toleration agree; in the one, common chymistry, in the other, chymistry in its *highest stage of perfection*, could not possibly effect this operation. *Edit.*



upon as inspired for so many ages and by so many nations, well deserved to be tried before he was condemned, and that it was proper before he pronounced, as your critics have done in a decisive and positive tone, this pretended impossibility, to be very clear in the matter, and to state the proofs by various experiments. What has been the result? His experiments have led him to execute by very simple means, what you thought impossible without the help of a miracle. Read, sir, his dissertation on this subject, in his *Opuscula*, you will there find, that “*the salt of Tartar, mixed with sulphur,*” “*dissolves gold so as to reduce it to a potable powder.*”

We might send you, besides, to the memoirs of your academy of sciences; but in all probability you do not read them. You insist on it, that *those eighty volumes contain nothing but empty systems, and not (1) one useful thing*. Cast your eye, however, on a work called *origin of laws, sciences, and arts*, where the author says, in speaking of a new course of chymistry of one of your most learned physicians, that “*the natron, a substance known in the*” “*east and more particularly near the Nile, produces this same effect*. That Moses was very well acquainted with the whole power of its (2) operation; and that he could not find out a better method of punishing the treachery of the Israelites, than by obliging them to drink this powder, because gold reduced potable in this manner has a detestable taste.”

## L

(1) *Not one useful thing*. See *seconde suite des melanges Edit. de Geneve*, Page 304 and observe, that nothing is so opposite to a systematical spirit, than the spirit of this academy. One of its first principles is to adopt no system whatsoever. *Aut.*

(2) *Its operation*. Moses had been instructed in all the sciences of the Egyptians. Now the art of casting metals, and of refining them, was known by this people in the time of their first kings. Many ancient historians assert this, Diodorus, Siculus, Agatharchides, &c. It appears that it was from the Egyptians that the Greeks learned to work metals. *Aut.*



This possibility of rendering gold potable has been often repeated since the time of Stahl and Senac, in the works and in the lectures of your most celebrated chymists, Baron, Macquer, &c. &c. They all agree in this point. We have none of them before us now, but the last edition of le Fevre's chymistry. He clears up this point as well as the other writers, and he adds, "that nothing is more certain, and "that we can no longer entertain the least (1) doubt "of the matter."

What think you now, sir; is not the testimony of those ingenious chymists as respectable as that of your critics? And what is it that those uncircumcised men are attempting? They know nothing of chymistry, and yet they will talk of it; they might have spared themselves this shame.

But did you not know, sir, when you were transcribing this sorry objection, that the poorest chymist could confute it? Chymistry is not your talent, it is easy to see it. "Therefore de Rouelle's (2) passion "rises, his eyes flash fire, and his rage bursts forth "when by chance he reads what you have said of it "in some parts of (3) your works." Sound the epic trumpet, sir; dispute the prize with Sophocles and Euripides, but lay aside the art of *Pott* and *Magraff*!

Here, then, the principal objection of your critics, which they advanced with the utmost confidence, is confuted. Let us proceed to the next.

(1) *The least doubt.* Aben Ezra had already suspected that Moses had rendered gold potable by some chymical process. Some time after Aben Ezra, another Rabbin, wrote that he had been himself witness to a like operation. But doubts had been entertained until the time of Stahl. Observe how useful discoveries are, since so many years after, the old errors are foisted in upon us again. *Aut.*

(2) *de Rouelle's.* This famous man, who died since the former edition of these letters, was deservedly reckoned the first chymist in France. We are well assured, that he did not admire those parts most in Mr. Voltaire's writings which treated of chymistry. *Christ.*

(3) *Your works.* Let Mr. Voltaire say what he will, it is certain that the passage marked with commons is not to be found in the edition published at Paris, at Lawrence Prault's *avec approbation & privilege*. But since the illustrious writer has quoted it, and seems not dissatisfied with it, we think we may give it another place in this edition. *Aut.*



§ 2. *Whether a miracle was necessary, or three months labour to cast the golden calf.*

Those learned critics affirm again, *that it was impossible in less than three months, without a miracle, to cast the golden calf.* In this they err, or are willing to lead others into error.

Perhaps they think this golden calf was a Colossus: But, sir, you have not forgot, I hope, that, according to the plan of our forefathers, it was intended to be borne at the head of our armies. *Make us, say they, gods which can go before us.* You may well suppose, that according to this plan, it was not necessary that this statue should be as heavy as Harry the IVth's horse on the Pont-neuf, or the laocoon at Marli. Perhaps the criticks have seen the golden calf represented in some picture according to the caprice of the painter, and they have concluded rashly from the painting to the original. You well know, sir, that painters, as well as poets, are often bad authorities.

Some Christians have wrote that this golden calf was made in the form of an human body, with the head of a calf, in the taste of those anubises with dogs heads, which are shewn in the cabinets of the curious, or in the form of those cherubims with calves heads, of which you speak in some place. You think that this idol was an Apis; so let it be. But do you deem a miracle necessary for casting an anubis or apis portable and coarsely executed, as were the works of the Egyptians, who were the (1) teachers of our forefathers in the arts?

(1) *The teachers of our forefathers, &c.* According to Mr. Voltaire they were ignorant teachers, without taste. His predominant madness at present is to shew that the Egyptians were the most contemptible people (always excepting us however) on the face of the earth. *The Egyptians, says he, upon the whole, were a contemptible people, let the admirer of pyramids say what they will.* As if the pyramids had been the only monuments which had procured to the Egyptians the admiration of posterity, and that nothing had ever been said of their other buildings, of their temples, their palaces, and so many other works both useful and magnificent. Has the illustrious writer forgot those great and beautiful causeys, those numerous moles from whence their cities, commanding the floods, securely beheld the rivers fertilizing their plains; those mighty lakes, immense reservoirs of water, without which the lands



We shall not say, that perhaps our ancestors had some particular process, with which we are not acquainted, that might have accelerated this work: This conjecture, however, after what we have said, would not appear chimerical. All we require of you is to go into a founder's shop: I will answer for it that if you supply him with proper materials, hurry him, and pay him well, he will complete this job for you in less than a week. We made no great enquiries, and we found two of this trade who required but three days for the work. There is much difference between three days and three months. And we doubt not but upon a stricter search, workmen might be found who would finish it in still less time.

§ 3. *Whether Aaron cast the golden calf in a single day.*

With a view of rendering a miracle more necessary, or the absurdity of the pretended story, more palpable, the criticks assert, that "the people applied to the brother of Moses, in order to get the golden calf the eve of that day, in which Moses came down from the Mount, and that Aaron cast it in one day."

But where did the criticks find all these particulars? In their own imaginations I suppose; for certainly they are not in scripture. Neither the day in which the people asked for the golden calf, nor the time which Aaron took to make it are determined in scripture.

If therefore it is absolutely impossible, as they say, that, this idol could be cast in one day. If this fact is absurd, or unaccountable without a miracle, which they deem to be the same thing, let them observe, that not Moses, but they themselves assert those things. How dare they then ascribe them to the sacred writer, who never spoke of them? It is easy to

would have been barren; those canals, which distributed the waters on all sides, facilitated commerce, and kept up plenty? &c. &c. Does he know nothing of the Egyptians but their pyramids? But the declaimer Bossuet, as he calls him, had cried up Egypt, and had said nothing of China. It was therefore proper to cry up China, and lower Egypt. *Edit.*



find absurdities in an author, when we put what we please into his mouth, and without remorse, father on him the children of our own imaginations.

Thus sir, three days, and perhaps less, were sufficient for casting the golden calf, and it is not said in any place, that Aaron took up but one in that work. Judge yourself, whether the objection of your critics is well founded.

§ 4. *Whether it was impossible for the Jews to supply gold enough, for making this statue.*

*Collins, Tindall, Bolingbroke, &c. &c. (1) cannot conceive that the Jews, who had not wherewith to mend their sandals, could ask for a calf of massy gold.*

This last expression, upon which they dwell with so much satisfaction, and which you affectedly repeat, can no longer intimidate us. Although the golden calf was *massy*, yet we have seen that it must have been portable, and of consequence that it could not be of very great weight.

*But in short, say you, how could the Jews supply gold enough to make even a portable calf.*

How! the book of Exodus will inform you. *By bringing unto Aaron, the golden ear-rings of their wives, their sons and their daughters.*

Suppose, sir, that out of two millions of souls, to which the Hebrew people amounted, according to your own calculation, there were only 150,000

(1) *Cannot conceive.* What matters it whether they can conceive it or not? They could not conceive neither, that *chymistry*, in its highest stage, could dissolve gold, so as to render it potable. And yet we have shewn the certainty of this. *They cannot conceive! They cannot imagine!* Fine principles of reasoning indeed! No source will produce more paralogisms, and false inferences than this. From such premises as these, the vulgar conclude, that juggler's tricks, are the effects of magic, and that jugglers are conjurors. All reasonings of this sort, may be reduced to the following syllogism "I, an ignorant man or a wit, it matters not which, who am not acquainted with the powers of nature, or the improvements of industry, who have but a slight tincture of the arts and their processes, who have studied but superficially the histories of ancient nations, their languages and their customs, I comprehend within my narrow and feeble conception, all the ideas of what is or what may be. Now *I cannot conceive that such a thing is or can be.* Therefore it is not." The proper answer to this argument is, that this proposition, *I comprehend*, &c. which, although it is seldom expressed, is always understood, favours neither of modesty nor truth. *Aut.*



persons, women, boys, and girls, who wore ear-rings of gold, and let us estimate each ear-ring at a Drachm only. You see that I am far from valuing things too high. Do not you think sir, that 150,000 Drachms of gold would suffice to make a portable golden calf.

How will your learned criticks answer this? Will they deny that the women and children of the Hebrews, usually wore ear-rings of gold? But besides the affirmation of the sacred writer, that even in the time of Abraham, this kind of ornament was known in Palestine, and the neighbouring countries. It was the custom of the Ishmaelites, to wear them, even when they were (1) going to battle. And at this time the Arabians, who are their descendants, and inhabit the same deserts, adorn themselves with them in common. In short, the use of them was common among the Egyptians. And why should not the Hebrews have had them too? Perhaps you think, that they had left these jewels behind them in Egypt, or that the gold of their ear-rings, like the *soles of their sandals*, had been worn away in the space of three months.

*But*, you will say, *the Jewish nation was poor*. We shall presently shew you that they were far from being so poor as you suppose them. But even allowing them to be so, must they have been a very rich people, if among two millions of souls, there were found 150,000 persons, who wore, each of them, a jewel valued at a Drachm of gold? How can you tell besides, whether the greatest number of those ear-rings, did not make part of those precious effects, which they borrowed from thier ancient masters? We may conclude that this objection, is just as weak as the (2) former ones.

(1) *Going to Battle*. It is related in the 8th Chapter of the book of Judges, that the Israelites made a present to Gideon, of all the jewels of this kind which they had taken from the vanquished Midianites. It was found that the ear-rings alone, amounted to 1700 shekels of gold, that is to say, according to some writers, to more than 2500 Louisdors. *Aut.*

(2) *Former ones*. How can a reasonable objection be drawn from the quantity of gold, which was to form a statue, when the proportions of that statue are not known? *Edit.*



§ 5. *Concerning the 23,000 men, which those criticks say were slaughtered, for having worshipped the golden calf.*

“ Deceived by the goodness of their hearts, they cannot believe that Moses slaughtered twenty three thousand men, to expiate this crime, or that so many men would have suffered themselves to be slaughtered by the Levites, without the help of another miracle.”

It seems then, that your learned men, do not think that there were 23,000 men killed in this action. Nor we neither, sir. But, however, the arguments of those criticks do not appear to us the founder for this reason. Let us, with your leave examine them.

“ Humanity, goodness of heart, prevent them from believing, &c. &c.” You say that this goodness of heart deceives them. Perhaps you are right, for it is not according to the weak suppositions of men that God regulates his judgments and his vengeance. To reason only in a political light, do they know exactly how far it was proper to carry severity in order to keep this intractable multitude in awe of the legislator, and in an attachment to their religion, that principal part and basis of all legislation? Humanity and goodness of heart are not the only virtues which the head of a great nation should possess. He should besides be firm and severe, more especially when the transgressors are in great numbers, and the transgression enormous. Now that of the Hebrews was so much so, that your writers have just now pronounced it inconceivable.

“ Twenty-three thousand men slaughtered by the *Levites* !” To hearken to those great criticks would induce one to believe that these *Levites* were but an handful of trembling priests. But in the text, things are very different. These *Levites* are no less than *all the sons of Levi*, that is, the entire tribe of Levi, a tribe which you know was not (1) the least war-

(1) *The least warlike.* Our learned writers, who are accustomed to confound every thing, and to judge of every thing by that small circle of objects



like of the twelve, nor probably the (1) least attached to Moses. Even suppose that part of this tribe had been involved in the general transgression, and let us suppose, the number of the Levites who were drawn out against the transgressors to have been 10 or 12,000. Is it impossible that 10 or 12,000 men should kill 23,000! And was a miracle necessary to enable 10 or 12,000 men in arms, animated by the command of the legislator, and by zeal for their religion, to massacre a people who were taken by surprize and unarmed, and who were intimidated by remorse for their crime and by the fear of punishment? How many, much more (2) astonishing events, does prophane history relate which nobody ever called in question? Therefore the reasonings of your

which surrounds them, from the same idea of our Levites as they do of the priests of their religion. This is another mistake. 1st. At the time of this action, the Levites had not yet been consecrated to the service of the altar; they bore arms like the rest of the Israelites. This observation should not have escaped Mr. Voltaire at least.

2d. Even after the consecration of the Levites to the altar, altho' they were exempted from military service, they were often seen fighting in our armies. Phineas, the grandson of Aaron, distinguished himself no less by his courage than by his zeal. He went to battle, and some people think that he commanded the Hebrews when they vanquished the Midianites. The priest Benaïas was one of David's heroes and general of Solomon's armies. The exploits of the Macabees are known, and in later times, Josephus the historian, was at once a priest and one of the greatest captains of our nation. *Edit.*

(1) *The least attached to Moses.* Moses was of the tribe of Levi, for this reason this tribe must have had a particular attachment to him. *Edit.*

(2) *More astonishing events.* In prophane history we see handfuls of men cutting thousands to pieces ranged in battle array. Here, on the contrary, several thousand men armed fell suddenly upon a crowd, unarmed, and entirely taken up with that prophane festival which they were celebrating. This is a striking circumstance which the continuation of Moses's recital and the clear and precise text confirm. Here follows this text as we read it in the translation of one of your most famous Hebraists (*Father Houbigant*) "Moses having seen that the people were given up to the mad joy of that festival, which had been appointed by Aaron, and that it would be easy to cut them to pieces, if they were attacked, stood up at the gate of the camp and cried out, who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me, and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him, and he said unto them," &c. &c. Exodus, Ch. 32. v. 25.

This passage is a sufficient answer also to those who, like the author of the *Philosophy of History*, supposing that this massacre was committed without distinction, draw from it a pretence for censuring the conduct of Moses. It is evident that this slaughter fell only upon those who were actually employed in the worship of the idol, and by consequence, upon the transgressors. To affirm the contrary is evidently to misunderstand the text, or grossly to calumniate the legislator. *Aut.*



writers are but weak arguments even against our vulgate version of the Bible.

Now if they prove nothing against the vulgate version, what success will they have against the ancient versions, even the Latin versions, against the Greek, Syriac, Chaldaick, versions which reduce those 23,000 men to 3000? What success will they have especially against the Hebrew text? According to this text, which is the only one we are bound to defend, there were only about 3000 men slaughtered. Is it the fault of the sacred writer, if your interpreters have wrote the word *twenty* instead of *about*?

Now let the number be thus reduced, and what becomes of the impossibility of 23,000 men being slaughtered by the Levites, or of the necessity of a miracle to comprehend it and of all the empty declamations of your critics?

However, say you, there remain 3000 men killed. Is this nothing? This, at least, sir, may be called a reasonable objection. Yet, if we are not mistaken, the difficulty may be reduced to this point, whether when the number of the guilty amounts to 3000, God can punish them. If you deny this proposition, produce your proofs, we promise to answer you.

§ 6. *Whether it is a fact absolutely inconceivable, that the Hebrews should have required a golden calf at the foot of mount Sinai, for adoration.*

Your writers, sir, cannot conceive that the Jews could ask for a golden calf for adoration, at the foot of the mountain where God was conversing with Moses, in the midst of the thunder and lightning, and the sound of the heavenly trumpet which were then seen and heard.

But, first, where have those criticks found that the splendid and dreadful appearances, in which God was pleased to manifest himself to his people, lasted forty days, the time of the legislators stay on the mount? It is said indeed, that when he went up, it was covered with a thick cloud, and that *the glory of the Lord, which appeared on the summit, was like*



a burning fire. But that *the thunderings and the lightnings, that the sound of the trumpet*, that even the cloud and the fire which issued out of it, continued until Moses came down, cannot be found in Exodus, or in any other sacred writer.

Whilst you aggravate the crime of our forefathers, by dwelling on false or at least (1) doubtful circumstances, why do you conceal one which the sacred writer mentions, and deserves notice.

True, sir, our fathers were *at the foot of the mountain where God was speaking to Moses*. But for a long time they knew not, they said, *what was become of Moses*. They had seen him several times before going up and coming down from the mountain, to convey to them the orders of the Lord. But at this time, on the contrary, he had not returned for the space of more than a month. Amazed at his long absence, and not knowing what might have happened him, they lost all hopes of seeing him again, and imagined themselves to be in the midst of those deserts, without chief, laws, or worship. Is it inconceivable that in such circumstances, those ignorant men, left to themselves, and looking upon themselves as forsaken by their God, whom they no longer heard, should have fabricated for their own use, one of those visible gods, which so many other nations worshipped.

Secondly, Who knows, sir, whether in their intention, the honours which they paid to this idol, were not relative to God their deliverer, and whether their whole guilt did not consist in having worshipped him, contrary to his commands, under a corporeal figure? Learned men have been of this opi-

(1) *Doubtful circumstances*. They are looked on as such by many learned Christians, and among others, by the famous le Clerc. According to him, the whole of this mighty spectacle was at an end. Even the cloud was no longer seen, except perhaps upon some height. *Cum non cerneretur*, says he, *amplius nubes nisi forte in aliquo montis jugo*. But even suppose all these circumstances were true, what conclusions could we draw from them? We well know that the most extraordinary and formidable objects, become by habit familiar to men. Prejudice which judges partially, stupidity which reasons not at all, and incredulity which cavils at every thing, may produce this effect. *Edit.*



nion, and the text seems to favour it; *O Israel, say, that senseless people, looking on the idol, there is thy God, who brought thee out of Egypt.* And Aaron, when he is proclaiming the festival, which they were to celebrate, tells them, *To-morrow is a feast to the Lord.*

Thirdly, However this opinion may stand, consider, sir, what the Hebrews then were, from whence they came, and what notions were generally entertained of idolatry. They had just left Egypt, where this worship prevailed; they saw it spread forth on all sides; it was the religion of the most flourishing states, and of the nations most famed for wisdom. This worship, which seems so extravagant to us now, dazzled them by its brilliant outside. Publick authority protected it, and established custom covered the madness of it. You yourself repeatedly say, that the Hebrews were a *barbarous, stupid, superstitious* people. Is it hard to conceive that men of this character, hurried away by the example of their neighbours, yielded on this occasion, to their inclination towards a kind of worship then in repute, which flattered their taste by pompous ceremonies, and festal mirth? Do you not know what a mighty influence strong prejudices, the power of custom, (1) the empire of the senses have, especially over vulgar minds? Reason then, sir, conformably to your own feelings, and allow this, either that our forefathers were not such men as you represent them, or join with us in saying, that they were very likely to fall into idolatry in such circumstances, even at the foot of mount Sinai.

(1) *The empire of the senses.* We cannot conceive how the Israelites could be so stupid, as to worship an image, which they had just cast with their own hands. And can we conceive how the Egyptians, that wise nation, the Romans, that magnanimous people, the Greeks, so polite and clear-sighted a people, could adopt a worship so absurd? Our fathers hurried away by the power of example and habit, have sometimes worshipped the idols of the Gentiles. But if idolatry is banished now almost from the whole face of the earth, if it can be looked on now only in the light of inconceivable extravagance, to whom is this owing? Did not our fathers re-establish and preserve the true worship, which all other nations had abandoned. *Edit.*



§ 7. *Of the transgression of Aaron and of his promotion to the dignity of high-priest.*

Further, your critics “think it extraordinary that Aaron, who was the most guilty of all, should have been rewarded for that very crime for which the rest underwent so dreadful a punishment, by being appointed high-priest, whilst the bloody remains of his three and twenty thousand brethren, were heaped at the foot of that altar on which he was going to sacrifice.”

The transgression of Aaron was certainly grievous and abominable; but I pray you noble critics, Bolingbroke, Tindall, Collins, &c. consider the circumstances he finds himself in. On one side, he is as ignorant as the other Hebrews, whether his brother will ever return, and whether God, who is now silent, will ever again deign to speak to his people. On the other hand, he is hurried, he is imperiously commanded. *Up, say they, make us Gods.* In vain he strives to calm their spirits, and to keep them faithful to their duty. He knows their violent and impetuous character. O sublime philosophers! Your souls, intrepid and strangers to fear, would perhaps have remained unshaken in these circumstances. But a weak mind might have been daunted *without a miracle.* All hearts are not possessed of that intrepid courage, which philosophy inspires.

*He should have died,* You say (1) in another place. He should, nobody disputes it. But do we always act as we should? And do we pretend to say that he was innocent?

*Aaron, the most guilty of all.* Who told you this? Did you read his heart? How do you know but the dread of violence, his reluctance in yielding to it, and the bitterness of his repentance rendered him more worthy of being spared than the rest?

He transgresses, but repentance soon follows the transgression. The sincerity of his sorrow, and the prayers of his brother, disarm the Lord, who was

(1) *In another place.* See the Philosophy of History. *Aut.*



preparing to extirminate him, with the rest of the guilty. He obtains his pardon, and sometime after is raised to the sacerdotal office. This is what your writers call, *being rewarded for his crime*. You must allow, sir, that although this expression has the merit of energy, yet it has not entirely that of justness.

*Whilst the bloody remains of 23,000 of his brethren, &c.* What a description is this sir! We discover your tragic pencil. This picture is moving, but is it a true one? In reality you know as well as we do, that there were not 23,000 men killed. What pleasure do you take, in giving us that for truth, which you know in your heart, is false, or at least doubtful?

And when you represent *those bloody remains, heaped up at the foot of the altar*, are you ignorant that several months had elapsed, since this bloody act had been done? We must allow, that by bringing those distant objects nearer to our view, the scene becomes more moving. But, sir, I pray you less pathetick, and more exactness. The same liberties are not granted to criticism as to poetry.

Therefore the promotion of Aaron, to the sacerdotal office, after his transgression, has nothing extraordinary in it. In order to condemn it, as your writers do, it would be necessary to prove, that God cannot punish those who commit sin, and pardon those who repent. Do you mean to deprive him of this right?

§ 8. *That the account of the adoration of the golden calf, and of Aaron's transgression, could not have been added to the books of Moses.*

Let us conclude by a reflection, which must strike every impartial reader, viz. That it is morally impossible, that the relation of these two facts, should have been *added to the books of Moses*. Who, for instance, could have added the transgression of Aaron? Could it have been an author not of the sacerdotal order? But would the priests, the guardians of the sacred writings, have suffered it? Could it have been



one of that order? What! would the priests have corrupted the records of their religion, to dishonour themselves without reason, by dishonouring their chief and father?

We may draw the same conclusion with respect to the golden calf. If this is an apochryphal fact, *added to the books of Moses*, when, by whom, how was this done? What strange interest could prompt this forger, thus to cast a blemish on his ancestors and his nation? How happens it that the forger was never detected? Or if he was, how comes it that the forgery was not blazoned through the world? By what unaccountable stupidity, has this people, who was always zealously attached to their sacred writings, permitted any one to falsify the truth of them, by inserting into them, not miracles worked in their favour, but calumnious facts, so shameful to the fathers and mortifying to the children? How could those facts be transmitted from mouth to mouth without contradiction? How came they to pass from the Pentateuch into the other (1) sacred books, and even into the (2) sacred poetry of the nation? Can you conceive this, sir, and do your writers conceive it?

I admire those criticks. The authenticity of the books of Moses, appears doubtful to them, because the adoration of the golden calf and the transgression of Aaron, are related in them. But for this reason precisely, every impartial man will conclude, that

(1) *Sacred books.* "This Egyptian worship, says Mr. Freret, Moses "points out in the canticle, which he composed a little time before his death. "They have provoked the Lord, says he, by sacrificing to Gods, whom their fathers "never worshipped. With this same worship, the prophet Ezekiel upbraids "them as the most ancient crime of the Jewish nation, and the corruption of "their youth. Edit.

(2) *Sacred poetry of the nation.* "We read in one of the psalms an account of the several transgressions of the Hebrews. The adoration of the golden calf is not forgotten in it. They made themselves, says the psalmist, a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the metal which they had carved. They changed their glory into the likeness of a calf that eateth grass. Notwithstanding this, the author of the *Philosophy of History*, affirms, that no prophet ever mentioned the adoration of the golden calf. Does he not place David in the rank of prophets? This christian truly seems well instructed in his religion! Aut.



these writings were never materially altered. Such facts, instead of being added, would have been first (1) expunged. The more odious this double forgery would have been, the more inconceivable it is, how a forger could accomplish it, the priests suffer it, and the people believe it.

Thus, to sum up what we have said on this subject in a few words. Let our forefathers be allowed to have had some skill in chymistry. Let us form no false suppositions of the proportions of the golden calf, or of the excellence of its workmanship. Let us recollect the character of the Israelites and the circumstances they were in. But above all let us stick to the text of scripture. Let nothing be taken from, or added to it. And all these pretended weighty objections, will fall of themselves.

Behold, sir, how easy it is to answer those objections; and allow this, That you must have a great contempt for your readers, if you think that they can be dazzled by them. Did you imagine, that the great names you quoted, would intimidate them? In this respect, I know not the dispositions of Christians; but as to the Hebrews, before they believe any thing, they weigh authorities, and read texts.

We are, &c. &c.

(1) *Expunged.* We may judge of this, by the manner in which Josephus has acted. He does not deny the fact; but for fear of casting an odium on the first of our high-priests, and the whole nation, before the uncircumcised, he has made no scruple of striking it out of his history. *Aut.*



## LETTER VI.

*In which another objection is answered, with respect to the adoration of the golden calf and the transgression of Aaron.*

**I**S it not extraordinary, sir, that writers who so often calumniate our fathers, and impute to them, without scruple or foundation, horrid deeds, shocking to thought, yet obstinately refuse to believe too real a crime, which the most ancient of our writings relate, and all our records attest?

We met with one objection more, to the adoration of the golden calf, and the transgression of Aaron, in some new tracts which we lately perused. It is drawn from the splendid miracles, to which the Hebrews had been so often witnesses, and in which Aaron co-operated with his brother.

This objection, the only one, which can with any shew of reason be made to these two facts, and which might be extended to all the transgressions related in the Pentateuch, seemed to us to deserve a full answer, and it shall be the subject of this letter. It is mortifying to children, to be forced to return to the proof of their father's guilt. But every thing shall give place in our hearts to the love of truth. Let the task be ever so unwelcome, we shall still continue to pay it this melancholy tribute.

“Is it possible, say they, Is it conceivable that Aaron and the Hebrews, after all the mighty miracles they had been some of them witnesses to, and the former even the co-operator, should, notwithstanding prostitute their incense to a vain idol?”

It must be allowed, that this breach of faith, as well as many others, of which our fathers were guilty, has something in it extraordinary, and that it shews this people had a very strange untowardness of mind, and hardness of heart. And agreeably to this,



the books of Moses are full of sharp and bitter reproaches for these things, which he ceased not to cast on them. But upon what grounds do the authors of those tracts, hold these facts to be impossible?

They judge probably of our fathers by themselves. But first, they wrong themselves; they are polished people, and of enlightened understandings. But the Hebrews were *ignorant and barbarous*.

Besides, are they competent judges of their own hearts? Have they calculated exactly, how many obstacles to the efficacy of miracles, might proceed from the natural frailty of man, the hurry of passions, the blindness of prejudice, the errors of a presumptuous philosophy, which raises disputes on every thing, and strives to draw every thing within its narrow perspective?

Why should the sight of some miracles, work upon them those effects, which the daily wonders they were witnesses to, cannot produce? The great spectacle of nature, for instance, more striking in the eye of wisdom, and more awful to them than the sea divided, the water flowing from the bosom of rocks, or mount Sinai resounding with the heavenly trump, and the crash of thunder? Let them examine themselves, and try whether their desires have been always pure, and their actions innocent! What! Although filled with the sublimest notions, of the sanctity of the law of nature, and of the obedience due to the supreme legislator, who hath written it on their hearts. Although witnesses to his works, and breathing only by his good will, they dare to infringe his commands, and yet they cannot conceive how the Hebrews could transgress, after so many miracles! The one is not more inconceivable than the other; there is the same blindness on both sides.

No, sir, neither the most striking miracles, nor the most splendid wonders of nature, can fix man invariably, in the right way. Every thing depends on the dispositions of those, who are witnesses to them. Whilst some of a just way of thinking, acknowledge



in one as well as in the other, the power of the almighty, and the evident traces of his wisdom and goodness, how many others, of a perverse and presumptuous cast, will see nothing in them but juggling and deceit, blind chance, or necessary combinations! How many other heavy, thoughtless creatures, slaves of habit and passion look on them with a stupid indifference only, without drawing any conclusions from them, for the regulation of their lives; or else contradict every day, in their conduct, the consequences which they had drawn!

Lastly, writers who look upon miracles as so many absurdities, and who deny not only the existence, but also possibility of them, do not appear to us competent judges of their efficacy on the human heart. Hence *those mighty opposers of revelation*, agree but ill with one another on this head. If some of them persuade themselves, that miracles would have a power irresistible, others are of a very different opinion. *Make the lame walk, says one of those criticks, or the dumb speak, raise the dead, I shall not be (1) shaken by this.* Here certainly, we have a man well convinced that miracles may be resisted, and who probably would not yield to them. Who knows but there might be among the Hebrews, some heads constructed like this *philosopher's*, who, in the midst of false reasoning, would have thought themselves, as he says, *more sure of their arguments than of their eyes!*

The wonders therefore worked for our forefathers, and before their eyes, although they rendered their transgressions more criminal, yet did not make them either impossible or inconceivable. Neither miracles, nor the prodigies of nature, captivate the will. And he that has wrought them, or seen them wrought, ceases not, on that account to be a man, that is to say, a weak sinful being. Must Jews be obliged to

(1) *Shaken*. Observe the noble harmony which subsists between those gentlemen. *I would not resist miracles*, says one, *I should not be shaken by them*, says another. Thus these wise men agree. Edit.



recall these things to the minds of Christians? Is it our province to inform them, that God can communicate his power to men, without depriving them of their frailty?

We remain, &c.



## LETTER VII.

*Whether it is incredible that the Israelites, when they were at Sinai, could defray the expence of the construction of the tabernacle, and of the other works described in the book of Exodus.*

**H**OW can we believe, sir, that our fathers, upon their arrival at mount Sinai, were deficient in the art of engraving characters, and in every other art, even the most necessary, if the tabernacle and the other works pertaining to worship, were then executed, as is related in the book of Exodus? This objection was so striking, that your writers could not help making it to themselves, and endeavouring to answer it. We shall first enquire into the manner in which they state this objection to themselves; next, into their answer; and then into the question, whether it is as incredible as they pretend, that the Israelites could then defray the expence of these works.

§ 1. *That the objection, which these critics make to themselves, is improperly proposed. Their mistake with regard to the pillars of the tabernacle.*

You say, sir, that “if it is objected to these critics, “that the pillars of the tabernacle were of brass, “and the chapiters of massy silver, they answer, &c. “&c.” They need not fear, no objection will be made, *that the pillars of the tabernacle were of brass.* Why? For this plain reason, *Because they were not of brass.* If your critics think so, they are mistaken. They were of (1) setim-wood. Read the text in any version you please, and you will be convinced. This is also true of their chapiters. They were not,

(1) *Setim-wood.* This setim or sittim-wood, was probably a kind of acacia, which grows mostly in Egypt, and in the deserts of Arabia. It has a fine black colour, and is very like ebony. See Thevenot. *Art.*

These trees, according to St. Jerom, resemble the white-thorn in their colour and leaves. They grow to such a size, that they used them for press-beams. *Edit.*



as your writers say, of *massy silver*, but of setim-wood overlaid with gold.

It is true, sir, that there were (1) sixty pillars more, not in the tabernacle, but in the court, which is a different thing, that were intended to bear the curtains which inclosed it round. If you meant these pillars at first, you should have expressed yourself more clearly. And secondly, even these pillars were no more of brass than the former.

I allow that your vulgate version seems to favour the opinion that these pillars were of brass; but if it says so (2) it is wrong. This is one of the errors with which, you know, this version abounds, even according to the opinion of your own divines.

Indeed it is not probable that Moses would have wished to incumber the Israelites, in their marches, with the weight of so many brass pillars. It is remarkable, that no account is given of them, in the general list of the works which were formed out of this metal. Would he have forgot them, if they had been of this metal? And agreeably to this, the Hebrew text does not say it. Your ablest commentators agree in this point with ours. They think that all those pillars, which you say were of brass, were only of *wood*. Consult the versions of the learned le Clerc, and of the learned father Houbigant, and you will find the text rendered in this sense by them.

As to the *chapters* which you make of *massy-silver*, they were not chapters of the Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian order. Moses probably constructed (3) his tabernacle, and his pillars in the Egyptian taste, to which he and his Hebrews had been accustomed. Now the Egyptians were not then, at least as you

(1) *Sixty pillars*. They reckoned 56 in the circumference of the court, and 4 at the entrance. *Aut.*

(2) *It is wrong*. It may be observed by what we have said, (and the observation will often recur) that one of Mr. Voltaire's stratagems, is to attribute to the text, the errors of the versions, and to both text and versions the blunders of the commentators. But when a man deals fairly has he recourse to these little subterfuges? *Edit.*

(3) *His tabernacle*. See the comments of le Clerc upon Exodus: Spencer, &c. *Aut.*



say, such skilful architects. *They were not acquainted with the beauty and richness of architecture, until (1) the time of the Ptolemies*, and there is some distance between the Ptolemies and Moses. Add to this, that these chapiters were not intended to support vast edifices, superb porticoes, entablatures, pediments, &c. &c. They were intended to support only hooks and curtains, therefore it was not necessary that they should be so solid: Hence one might justly infer that these chapiters would not have cost much, even had they been of massy silver.

But the truth is, that they were not of silver. Agreeably to this, it is related in (2) Exodus, that 1775 shekels of silver were laid out on the chapiters, and other ornaments of those pillars, that is to say, something less than 2000 French crowns. You see plainly that this sum would not have sufficed to make sixty fine Greek chapiters of *massy silver*, with their plinth, volutes, or acanthus leaves? But it might suffice to cover the tops of these pillars with plates of silver, and to decorate them with some circles or fillets of the same metal: And to this your writers should have reduced those *chapiters of massy silver*, which they have imagined, in order to give themselves trouble. They would then have agreed, not only with the most learned commentators and the

(1) *The time of the Ptolemies.* Before this era, the Egyptians according to Mr. Voltaire, *notwithstanding their palaces and their temples, of which people have spoken with such enthusiasm*, were nothing but wretched masons. When these famous monuments have been laid before this great man as objects of admiration, he raised his shoulders with scorn.

Notwithstanding the greatest part of the most learned, ancient and modern writers, and the best informed travellers, when they considered those monuments, instead of raising their shoulders with scorn, were struck with admiration. And we know besides great architects, who speak with encomiums of the Egyptian architecture which Mr. Voltaire despises. Such difference there is in tastes, such opposition in opinions! To be sure, not to speak of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Tacitus, among the ancients; Rollin and Bossuet among the moderns; Belon, Thevenot, Charles Lebrun, &c. &c. Very lately, the consul Maillet, doctor Pocock, captain Norden, &c. all these writers, travellers, and artists, with many others, were *enthusiasts*. Mr. Voltaire alone, has seen things in their true light! *Aut.*

(2) *In Exodus.* See chap. 38. It appears these 1775 shekels were, if not the whole, yet the greatest part of the money laid out on those ornaments *Edit.*



best version; but also with the original text, which expressly says, and that more than once, that the chapters of those pillars were *overlaid with silver*, and which does not say any where, that they were of *massy silver*.

Therefore the objection of those critics is improperly proposed, and it gives us reason to think, that when they wrote on the subject they were not well informed. The pillars should not have been the matter of the objection, but the tabernacle and every thing that belonged to it; the ark and the altar of incense, overlaid with gold, the candlestick of seven branches, the mercy seat, and the cherubims of very pure gold, the precious stones, the wool died with the finest colours, in a word, all those magnificent works which Moses describes, and which give us so high an idea of the progress of the arts, in an age in which Greece was yet barbarous. These are the things, sir, which they ought to have mentioned, if they had possessed more sincerity or knowledge; and these would be much better proofs, than their pretended *brass pillars*, and their *chapters of massy silver*, that our fathers, at the foot of mount Sinai, had not lost all their arts and artists, and that they were far from being reduced to that indigence in which you suppose them to have been.

§ 2. *False answer given by Mr. Voltaire's critics : We shew that the works, of which Moses speaks, were executed in the wilderness, and not put off to another season.*

Your critics, you say, answer that these works may have been appointed in the wilderness, but that they were not executed until happier times.

What is the exact meaning of this, sir? Do they mean only that a part of these works was not executed in the wilderness. Be it so: The other part then was executed there. But do they not see that this concession alone would overturn all that they advance? How could the Israelites execute even part of these works, if they had been in the greatest indigence, and had lost all their arts?



Will they say that none of these works were executed in the wilderness, and that they were put off to more happy times? But, 1st, Not only the Pentateuch, but all the sacred writings, the whole history of the Jews, suppose at least a part of them to have been executed there. 2dly, Why would the scripture have spoken so fully of these works at a period in which they did not take place, and made no mention of them at all, at the time when they were made? 3dly, if they were not then executed, where do you place *those happy times* of which you speak? Under Moses, the judges, the kings? These questions would puzzle you more than any man, sir, who believe that the Jews were still more unhappy under the judges than in the wilderness; that our greatest kings, David with all his wealth, and Solomon in all his glory, being willing to build a superb temple to the God of their fathers, could erect nothing *but a country barn*, and that the most happy period of the nation was, *when a Jew became farmer-general to Ptolemy Epiphanes*. Must we carry forwards so far, even as that time, the construction of the tabernacle, the ark, and all those magnificent works which belonged to them? Observe, sir, into what absurdities you throw yourself.

But let us not rest in conjectures. Let us open the (1) book of Exodus, and we shall there see Moses, not only receiving a most minute order for making these things, but we shall likewise see the execution of this order, related with (2) like exactness. We shall there find this wise legislator exhorting our fathers to consecrate unto the Lord, on this occasion, their most precious effects, then chusing the best artists, giving them the designs, inspecting the work, receiving the rich presents which they vie with each other in heaping on him, and with such eagerness, that he is obliged to forbid them to bring any more. We shall there see that when the work is finished,

(1) See chapters 26th, 27th, and 28th.

(2) See chapters 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th.



God commands him to set up the tabernacle, and lay in it the ark, the golden candlestick, &c. &c. and that these orders were executed on the first month of the second year, after their going out of Egypt. Lastly, we shall find that the whole remainder of the Pentateuch, and all our writings declare, that even then the ark was made, and the tabernacle, and all the utensils belonging to worship: And your critics come and tell us coolly, that these works were not executed until more happy times, which they imagine, without being able to point them out. To which of these are we to give the preference? To a relation so particular and so positive, or to assertions void of proofs?

§ 3. *State of the Hebrews when they came to mount Sinai. Whether it is incredible that they could defray the expence of the various works mentioned in the book of Exodus?*

But say your criticks, *the Hebrews in the wilderness, were a poor people, in want of every thing. Is it credible that they could defray the expence of all those magnificent works?*

Let us not fall into the mistake which these writers would cunningly draw us into. That our fathers, after having wandered thirty or forty years in the wilderness, should have been unable to bear the expence of so much magnificence; this might be; but is this the point in question? Not at all; the question is, sir, to know whether they were able to bear this expence when they arrived at mount Sinai, that is to say, three or four months after their departure from Egypt?

Now this people had inhabited, during two hundred years, before their departure, the most fertile province of this rich and flourishing country. They had been intelligent husbandmen, laborious artists, diligent traders, and had for a long time enjoyed the favour of their sovereigns, and the protection of government. Even that oppression which their prodigious increase brought on them had



not prevented them, in peaceable times, from attending to (1) commerce and the arts, and from living in a kind of affluence, which they afterwards (2) too often regretted. They had at last left Egypt: But how? After having had time to sell what they could not carry with them, they drove away their flocks and beasts of burthen, and had full liberty to remove their precious effects. To these their own, they had added the effects of their oppressors, from whom they had borrowed a number of golden vases, of jewels, stuffs of great value, &c. which they took away with them. In a word, they had gone according to the promise made by the Lord to Abraham, and repeated since to Moses, to (3) *with great wealth*, or as the psalmist expresses it, (4) *with gold and silver*. Was this, sir, a poor nation? And is it incredible that this people, three months after their departure from Egypt, should have been able to bear the expences mentioned in Exodus.

According to the estimate of one of your best (5) commentators, and that of one of your most intelligent writers in (6) such matters, the sum total of gold, silver, brass, jewels, &c. laid out in these works, would scarcely amount to five millions of livres, and it would not exceed seven, according to

(1) *Commerce and the arts*. They must have attended to them, since Moses found among the Hebrews, carpenters, founders, goldsmiths, engravers on precious stones, &c. &c. *Edit.*

(2) *Too often regretted*. *When we sat by the flestepots, (say they) and when we did eat Bread to the full: We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely. The cucumbers and the melons, &c. &c. See Exod. Ch. 16. V. 3. Num. Ch. 11. V. 5.*

(3) *With great wealth*. See Gen. Chap. 25. V. 14. Exodus, Ch. 3. V. 21. *Idem.*

(4) *With gold and silver*. See Psalm 104. *Et eduxit eos cum argento & auro, &c. Idem.* Observe that in Moses's recital, all the facts are connected with one another; the promise made to Abraham and renewed to Moses; the long residence of the Israelites in so rich a country; the blessing of Heaven shed upon their labours, the scourges inflicted on Egypt, which make that people wish for the departure of the Hebrews, &c. &c. All is connected. *Edit.*

(5) *Best commentators* D. Calmet. *Aut.*

(6) *In such matters*. M. Pelletier. *Id.*



the calculations of the learned Cumberland and Bernard. Do you think this too small a sum? Raise it to eight or even nine millions if you please. The valuation of the tabernacle, and of the things belonging to it *at nine millions*, is surely full high.

Now it is generally computed, and you yourself often repeat it, that when our fathers left Egypt, they amounted to (1) more than two millions of souls, without reckoning the strangers that accompanied them in their flight. Let us except out of this number all the strangers, and more than 1700,000 souls: Let us suppose that only 300,000 Israelites consecrated to God on this occasion the fifth part of their property, there is nothing in this but what the fervour of their zeal and joy for their deliverance might excite them to, and let us give each of them, upon an average, only 150 livres, of which 75 shall be supposed to be their own, and 75 more, what they took from the (2) Egyptians. These suppositions are certainly no way exorbitant. Now if you multiply 300,000 by 150, you will have a sum total of 45,000,000. Divide this number by 5, and you will have exactly nine millions, that is to say sufficient, or more than sufficient, for making the tabernacle, and all the other works described by Moses.

§ 4. *Confutation of some objections which may be made to the foregoing calculations.*

What can you object, sir, to the foregoing calcula-

(1) *More than two millions.* It appears that Mr. Voltaire and his writers have not exactly determined the number of the Israelites who went out of Egypt. Sometimes they make them amount to about two millions, sometimes to two millions and more, sometimes they rise to three millions increasing or diminishing according to their present necessity. These variations may be very convenient; but however a million more or less, in two or three is no trifle. *Edit.*

(2) *From the Egyptians.* To this might be added the spoils of those oppressors which were cast by the waves on the banks of the Red Sea, where the Israelites were; and the spoils which they could take from the Amalekites after they had vanquished them. The historian Josephus makes both these amount to a great sum. *Edit.*



tions? Would you reject the valuations of Calmet and Pelletier, because one of them was a Monk, and both of them Frenchmen? But we will produce you writers who are neither Frenchmen nor Monks, even two Englishmen.

This Bernard and Cumberland (1) were good sort of men, (2) you say. Yes, sir, and they were besides able men, and held a distinguished rank among the learned. They were deeply versed in antiquity, and had examined the subject which they treated to the bottom, of which your writers have probably but a very superficial knowledge.

Let the valuations of these learned men stand as they may, we have exceeded them, and added to them at least two millions. And we are certain that workmen might be found, who would willingly undertake for nine millions to make all the works mentioned in Exodus, provided only that we confined ourselves to the description given of them by Moses, and did not, as your criticks do, change wood into brass, and light ornaments of silver into *massy silver*.

Perhaps you may think that we value the effects which our fathers took from the Egyptians too high, when we estimate them at 75 livres for each of our 300,000 Israelites, who have been picked out of two

(1) *Cumberland*. Richard Cumberland, D. D. Bishop of Peterborough, distinguished himself by his great learning. He understood all the Greek and Latin authors, philosophy and mathematicks, in all their branches: He applied himself for a long time to an enquiry into the origin of ancient nations and the study of the text of the sacred writings, and the ancient interpreters, in their original languages. They say he learned Coptick at the age of 83. He has left us two learned treatises, one upon *the law of nature*, the other upon *the weights and measures of the Hebrews*. We have reason to be offended when we see certain writers, with their flimsy erudition, treating those great men so cavalierly. However the English need not be surprized at seeing their learned countrymen treated in this manner; since all the learned among the French have already shared this fate. *Edit.*

(2) *You say*. See *Philosoph. Dict. Bernard*. He was an Englishman born in the county of Worcester, one of the most eminent men in every part of the belles lettres. He understood Greek, Hebrew, and almost all the Oriental languages, mathematicks, astronomy: He had a deep knowledge of antiquity and criticism: We have several works of his, and amongst others, an excellent treatise *on the weights and measures of the Orientals*: This is to be found in Dr. Pocock's comment on the prophet Hosea: But the author has since made great additions to it, and has published it separately. *Edit.*



millions of souls, of which this people consisted. But, fir, does it require many jewels of gold, many rich stuffs, and much fine linen to make up 75 livres? Do you think that our Hebrews, on this occasion, did not use every art to get out of the Egyptians this kind of recompence for all their labours? Or that the Egyptians, looking upon them, after many prodigies, as a people protected in an especial manner by heaven, dreading them, (1) wishing their departure, flattering themselves perhaps with their return, did not hasten to lend them what they asked; more especially as God had disposed their hearts to this, and for this purpose *gave favour (2) to his people.*

Will you say that our other estimate is too high, that out of two millions of people there were found 300,000, who possessed upon an average, each 25 crowns. But, fir, take out of any state you please, even out of those where we are the most cruelly treated, more than two millions of Jews of every condition, labourers, tradesmen, merchants, &c. &c. Let them have time to sell such effects as they cannot carry with them: Let them go freely, and with their whole property: I insist on it, out of whatsoever state you take them, and into whatsoever state you remove them, that within the space of three months after their arrival, there shall be 300,000 of them possessed, upon (3) an average, of the value of 25 crowns.

(1) *Wishing their departure.* Egypt was glad at their departure, says the psalmist. *Aut.*

(2) *Favour to his people.* *Petierunt ab Egyptiis vasa aurea, vestemque plurimum, dominus autem dedit gratiam ut commodarent eis.* Exod. Id.

(3) *Upon an average.* We may form a judgment of this, by what has happened to the Jewish nation in those latter times. They have been banished, altho' in smaller numbers, from various states, and the decline of trade and fall of the revenue, which was the effect of their banishment, soon occasioned them to be recalled; which is a clear proof that they took away great sums with them. By what fatality must this nation, which always carried so much wealth out of the countries which it quitted, have left Egypt alone in a state of want?

Let us produce the example of the Spanish Jews only. After many cruel persecutions, which followed each other in a quick succession, they were driven from those kingdoms by the edict of Ferdinand and Isabella. Four months only were allowed them to prepare for their departure: *Even this*



Do you imagine, sir, that our ancestors were less industrious and active than their descendants: Or that, just excepting the favour of not throwing our children into the river, we are more favourably treated than they were in such countries as tolerate us, where we pay so dearly for that small portion of unwholesome air we are permitted to breathe.

But without instancing our fathers or ourselves, where is the people, consisting of two or three millions of souls, inhabitants of a rich and civilized country, among whom one could not find 300,000 persons possessed each of the value of 75 livres, or, which amounts to the same, who could not, upon an interesting occasion, and in a transport of zeal, contribute fifteen francs each? Could you name such a nation? Where then is the impossibility that our fathers should have done, at that time, what any other people, as numerous as they, could have done in like circumstances?

§ 5. *Causes of the errors which the critics have committed in treating this subject.*

What deceives you, sir, and your writers, are first, your false and wilful prejudices on the state of the Hebrews in Egypt. We have drawn this state

*permission, says Mr. Voltaire, of removing their gold and jewels, was afterwards retracted, and they were obliged to barter them for commodities. Yet all the writers assure us that they took prodigious wealth out of these countries. Mariana, the zealous panegyrist of Ferdinand and Isabella, and who consequently could not wish to increase the sum, allows that it was immense. He cannot conceal that politicians charged Ferdinand with having committed a great mistake, and given a dangerous wound to his kingdom by this expulsion, which enriched the neighbouring nations. Magna utique earum provinciarum compendio, ad quas copiarum ac pecunie magnam partem, aurum, argentum, gemmas, vestemque pretiosam secum detulere. And yet there went out of Spain only 170,000 families, according to some Spanish writers, and 120,000, according to the Jews. If we believe the author of an Essay on Universal History, they amounted only to 30,000 families: Perhaps he is better informed. Now what is 30,000 families, in comparison to a people of more than two millions of souls? You will say, perhaps, that Spain was richer than Egypt, in the time of our fathers: And that the Egyptians had not the mines of Peru? They had not, but they had mines at home. Diodorus Siculus, Agatharchides, and other ancient writers confirm this: And it appears that these mines were worked long before iron was in use, consequently in very ancient times; for Strabo relates that they were opened again when he was in Egypt, and that the brass tools were found in them, which the former workmen had used in their operations.* Edit.



for you out of Scripture, that is to say, out of the only monuments we have for information. You are pleased to represent it to yourself in a quite different light, and to exaggerate their indigence to excess.

It must be allowed, that as they were under subjection to the kings of that country, they lived for some time under oppression, and groaned under a yoke hard and tyrannical. But if you take the terms, slavery, servitude, in their most literal sense, and represent our fathers in Egypt like chained slaves, or the rowers of your galleys, or the Negroes in your colonies; you are mistaken sir, you ought to be better acquainted with the (1) value of tropes.

Your second mistake arises from an improper confusion of times: You imagine the Israelites, when they arrived at mount Sinai, to be in such circumstances as they would have been in after forty years residence in the wilderness. Would it not be more reasonable to distinguish these two periods, and to shew the difference between them.

It is true that even before their arrival at mount Sinai, they were in want of bread and water. But these transitory wants prove nothing. Do you not conceive sir, that people may have gold and silver, and want bread? Jewels and rich stuffs, and want water; especially in those horrid deserts? Rich Caravans, in those parts, have often experienced the same fate; and did any body ever conclude, that because they wanted water, they were poor, indigent, and in want of every thing?

And lastly, your mistakes arise from this; that you do not form to yourself a just idea of this mighty emigration of an innumerable, active and industrious

(1) *The value of tropes.* Those figurative and emphatical terms of captivity, slavery, &c. are still used by the Jews, to represent their present state in the different countries of Europe, in Italy, Poland, &c. even in Holland, where they are numerous and wealthy, and in England, where they were very near being naturalized.

The learned critic may besides recollect that according to his own confession, our fathers, altho' *slaves and captives in Babylon, yet grew rich there.* Therefore the idea of poverty and indigence is not necessarily connected the idea of that state which we call *slavery.* Edit.



nation, issuing forth from a rich and fertile country : An emigration which was announced long before, and for which, consequently, they had time to prepare themselves. How many millions more would your French protestants have carried out of France, if they had been in like manner apprized of their departure, and had quitted that kingdom freely, under one and the same chief, and with all their families and effects? What, sir, you assert that those refugees, who were far inferior in numbers to our fathers, and like them for a long time persecuted, and obliged to flee in haste ; took out of their intolerant country (1) so many millions, and yet you think, on the other hand, that the Hebrews were so poor when they left Egypt ! Were you impartial when you saw so much wealth on one side, and so much indigence on the other ?

Therefore, sir, this great indigence, this penury of the Jews at the foot of mount Sinai, is neither certain nor even probable. It is an affirmation unsupported by proof, and which many clear texts of Scripture contradict. If we judge by these texts, to which you can oppose nothing reasonable, the Israelites were able to bear all the expences of the construction of the tabernacle, and more : Therefore this construction was not impossible. Now this fact, in itself possible, happens to be recorded in the most ancient and respectable of their books. It is presumed in all the others, connected with all the events that follow and go before, and supported by the most uninterrupted tradition : Therefore one would think that empty conjectures are not sufficient to shake the certainty of it. We remain, &c.

(1) *So many millions.* In the postscript of the treatise on toleration, Mr. Voltaire makes Count d'Avaux say, that a single man had offered to discover more than 20,000,000 of livres, which they were sending out of France. Judge of the remainder by this offer, and judge also whether the learned critick can with justice dispute the 45 millions which we give to the Israelites, including their own property, and the spoils of the Egyptians.



## LETTER VIII.

*On the 24,000 Israelites, who were slaughtered on account of the Moabitish women, and the worship of Beel-phegor.*

WE have seen, sir, your learned and judicious criticks, representing the punishment of the worshippers of the golden calf as accessive in rigour, and impracticable in execution; and in order the better to prove both, they suddenly add 20,000 men to the 3000 who died on this occasion, in opposition to the clear voice of the text, and the testimony of the best versions.

With the same spirit of candour and impartiality, they cry out against the story of the 24,000 Israelites, *slaughtered* on account of the Moabitish women, and the worship of Beel-phegor. If we listen to these writers, ever friends to truth, *these 25,000 men were treated so cruelly to expiate the fault of one man, which after all was no great crime.* From these two propositions they infer, that this fact is incredible, and that the relation we read of it in the Pentateuch cannot belong to Moses.

We are going to examine them, sir; it will be easy to see, by what we shall say of them, what degree of belief these criticks, and all like them deserve, even when they speak in the most confident stile.

§ I. *Whether it be true that these 24,000 men were slaughtered to expiate the faults of one man.*

“ Tindall, Collins, &c. who cannot conceive  
 “ that Moses caused 23,000 Israelites to be slaugh-  
 “ tered for having worshipped the golden calf;  
 “ start the same difficulties on the 24,000 others  
 “ who were (1) butchered by his order, to ex-

(1) *Butchered.* Is this expression exact? It implies no form of trial, altho' it appears from the text, that many of these guilty men were con-



“piate the fault of one man who was surprized  
“with a (2) Moabitish woman.”

We suppose the same answers to the same objections. Turn to them, sir, Page 136. We think them satisfactory.

Your criticks add that these 24,000 men were butchered *to expiate the fault of one*. This assertion is new in order to establish its certainty, let us consult the Book of Numbers where this fact is related. We read the following account in it even according to your vulgate. Numbers, Ch. 25.

“And Israel abode in Shitim, and the people  
“began to commit whoredom with the daughters  
“of Moab: And they called the people to the sa-  
“crifices of their Gods, and the people did eat  
“and bowed down to their Gods. And Israel joined  
“himself unto Baal-peor, and the anger of the  
“Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord  
“said unto Moses, take all the heads of the peo-  
“ple and hang them up before the Lord, against  
“the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may  
“be turned away from Israel. And Moses said  
“unto the judges of Israel, slay ye every one  
“his men that were joined unto Baal-peor: And  
“behold one of the children of Israel came and  
“brought unto his brethren a Midianitish wo-  
“man, in the sight of Moses, and in the sight  
“of the congregation of the children of Israel,  
“who were weeping before the door of the taber-  
“nacle of the congregation. And when Phineas,

demned by Judges, and executed according to their sentence. Add to this, that the greater part of these 24,000 men was carried off by a plague with which God punished them, and which ceased at the death of Zambri. It was therefore rather an epidemical distemper than a *butchery*. *Edit.*

(2) *Moabitish woman*. This woman who was called Cosbi, was not a Moabite but a Midianite, and daughter of one of the kings of this country. This is a slight mistake, which Mr. Voltaire has taken care to correct in another edition, where he clears his writers of this little inaccuracy. He might have cleared them of many others. *Edit.*



“ the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the  
 “ priest, saw it, he rose up from among the con-  
 “ gregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and  
 “ he went after the man of Israel into the tent,  
 “ and thrust both of them thro’, the man of Israel  
 “ and the woman thro’ her belly: So the plague  
 “ was stayed from the children of Israel.

It is in this passage, sir, that your writers have found the innocence of those 24,000 men? We see in it, on the contrary, that they were expressly pronounced guilty; that they were seduced by those strange women, and gave themselves up to an impure commerce, of which idolatry soon became the dismal effect; that by this twofold crime they irritated the Lord, and drew upon their heads this sentence of condemnation; lastly, that the order for punishment was given before Zambri went in unto the Midianite woman. Had they been butchered to expiate this fault, the massacre would not have been ordered before the fault was committed. Their death was therefore the punishment of their own crimes, and not *an expiation for the fault of one man*. Thus your criticks, in order to give facts an odious appearance, alter their nature: The secret is admirable!

§ 1. *Whether Zambri and the 24,000 Israelites were but slightly guilty.*

If Zambri and the 24,000 Israelites, sir, were innocent, yet, in the opinion of your writers, they were not very guilty. *We see so many Jewish kings, and especially Solomon, taking to themselves strange wives, without punishment, that the criticks cannot think, that an alliance with a woman of Moab was so great a crime.*

So the excesses of those Hebrews with the women of Moab and Midian, the impure worship of Baal-phegor, which was the consequence of it, the insolent lewdness of Zambri going in unto the Midianite, in contempt of the law, the lawgiver, and the whole assembly of the people, who prostrate at the doors of the tabernacle, strove with floods of tears to appease the anger of the Lord; all these



transgressions, impiety, licentiousness and rebellion against public authority, these are all reduced by those writers merely to *an alliance with a woman of Moab*. You must allow, sir, that the denomination is gentle, and the name you give the action modest. We can easily distinguish the good nature of your criticks.

*So many Jewish kings marrying strange women without punishment*: Well, and what conclusion can we draw from this in favour of those fornicators and adulterers? Is it the same thing to take a wife, or to give one's self up to prostitutes?

*So many kings!* Could they not name them? No, sir, the number of them is not so great as these writers seem to think. Few of those strange women, persevering idolaters, went into the families of our kings, without carrying also with them confusion and misfortunes. And when your criticks quote a Solomon, they probably reckon as nothing the diminution of his authority in his latter years, the rebellions of his subjects, and the scepter of Israel taken from his son and his posterity for ever.

But even suppose that some of our kings had married idolatrous women with impunity, does an action cease to be criminal, because it is not always punished in a signal manner? What shocking deeds might be justified by this method of reasoning!

Your judicious criticks, to the example of these Jewish kings, which prove nothing, join that of Boaz, which prove still less. Let us see the turn they give it.

“ Ruth was a Moabitess, tho' her family was  
 “ originally of Bethlehem. The scripture, al-  
 “ ways call her Ruth the Moabitess. And  
 “ yet she went and laid herself in the bed  
 “ of Boaz, by her mother's advice. She marri-



“ ed him afterwards, and was grandmother of  
“ David.

Yes, Ruth was of Moab, but the holy scripture, which always calls her Ruth the Moabitess, does not say any where that she came originally from Bethlehem. This was not her native country, but that of her husband: Will your criticks never learn exactness.

*Notwithstanding by the advice of her Mother, &c.* It should be of her mother-in-law, for Ruth was not the daughter, but daughter-in-law of Naomi. When you transcribed the arguments of your writers, you should have corrected these little errors.

*She went and laid herself in the bed of Boaz.* Not in the bed but at the foot of it: This difference, which you perhaps deem trifling, may seem to others worthy of notice.

The advice of Naomi, and the behaviour of Ruth, no doubt appeared to your writers a transaction which, in their hands might become amusing; and this was the chief reason that we were favoured with his misplaced quotation. This piece of history is certainly not according to the present manner, but after all, is it as comical as those writers think?

To judge rightly of it, let us recollect that Naomi, when she gave this advice to her daughter-in-law, was thoroughly acquainted with the probity of her old kinsman, with the virtue of the young widow, and with her just pretensions to the hand, and the great possessions of Boaz. But especially remember this that Ruth did not live in the 18th century, nor in one of the streets of Paris, but in a time and place when three publications of Banns were not necessary to make a marriage lawful; where the consent of parties particularly in the present case, was sufficient, without any publick ceremony: In short, where a widow without children, had a right to require from her husband's nearest relation, that he



should marry her, and where, in case of refusal, she might bring him before a judge, there take off his shoes and send him home barefooted, after having spit in his face before the whole assembly. When all this is considered, can the history of Ruth afford matter of mirth to any but ignorant libertines?

*Boaz married her afterwards.* Besides that Boaz might think himself dispensed from that law which forbade marrying strange women, by the other which ordered the nearest male relation to marry the widow of a relation who had died without issue; Ruth had forsaken the religion of her country, and embraced that of our fathers. Now the law which prohibited marrying strange women, respected only those who remaining attached to the worship of idols, might entice their husbands to it: Such is the opinion of our doctors. Boaz therefore did not transgress the law by marrying Ruth. What relation is there between the conduct of this old man and the idolatry, the adulteries, &c. of the 24,000 men whom your criticks want to justify?

“ Rahab, say they, was not only a stranger, but  
 “ a common prostitute. The vulgate gives her  
 “ no other title but that of *Meretrix*. Yet she  
 “ married Salmon, prince of Juda.”

The title of *Meretrix*, sir, which the vulgate gives Rahab, does not prevent some learned men, Christians too, from maintaining that she was not a prostitute; and the Hebrew word, which answers to the Latin, does not necessarily convey that idea. However Rahab had been converted; she had quitted the worship of idols, and served (1) the God of Israel. Therefore she was not within the prohibition.

Nor was Bethsabe'. Your writers say, that she was

(1) *The God of Israel* One of the Apostles of the christian religion assures us, that *Rahab was justified by her works. Rahab Meretrix nonne ex operibus justificata est?* Mr. Voltaire in his *Philosophy of History*, says only, that she probably led, since that time, a better life, since she was the grandmother of David, and even of the Saviour of the world. This word probably, coming from a christian, well deserved notice from the Jews. *Edit.*



a stranger. This might be altho' the scripture does not mention it: It only informs us that the husband was an Hittite. But the Hittites of that time were, perhaps, only Hebrews settled in the land of the Hittites. At least Uriah, altho' a Hittite, served in the armies of David! he worshipped the God of his prince, and Bethsabe', like him, observed the law of Israel.

“ If we go farther back, the patriarch Juda married a Canaanite's: His children had for wife Tamar, of the race of Aram: This woman, with whom Juda committed an innocent incest, was not of the race of Israel.

By going so far back, sir, you may perhaps go up to the time when the law, which prohibited intermarrying with strange women, did not yet exist. Supposing it even to have existed in the time of the patriarch Juda, all that could be inferred from this, would be that he had committed a grievous fault in transgressing it. But does it follow that because Juda, his children, Solomon, &c. had incurred guilt, therefore the 24,000 men were innocent.

Upon the whole, altho' these examples are inconclusive, yet we must allow that they were not without a fixed purpose, but rather with a design. They serve to introduce two reflexions, one, *that Rabab, a prostitute, was a figure of the Christian Church*: the other, *that JESUS deigned to descend from five strange women, one of them guilty of incest, the rest prostitutes and adulteresses, &c.* We shall leave these pious reflections for the edification of christians; not doubting but you made or reported them with this view. We remain with the highest and most sincere regard, &c.



## LETTER IX.

*The opinions of the learned men on the Pentateuch, which are mentioned in the note, are examined.*

WHEN a man wants to attack generally received opinions, and that he has not good reasons to oppose, he strives to prop himself up cunningly, by great authorities: Under the shelter of illustrious names, he runs less risk of exposing himself, and he seems to contend to greater advantage, at least for a certain time, and in the opinion of certain readers.

Such, no doubt, were your views, sir, when you quoted in your note, that long list of celebrated writers, to whom you ascribe the reasonings you make, and of whom you say you are only the transcriber.

We dare not say that you never read the works of these learned men, but this we will venture to affirm, either, that you have misunderstood the opinions of most of them, or misinterpreted them: At least you do not speak of them with all that exactness which might be expected from such a writer as you: This is what we intend to prove to you, sir, and we think you cannot fail to draw the same conclusions from the faithful exposition, which we shall now lay before you.

§ 1. *Opinion of Woollaston, improperly called in the note Velzston and Vholaston.*

One may judge that you are little acquainted with this learned man, by the very manner in which you disfigure his name. He, of all the writers whom you mention, least deserves a place in your list: We have read his book on *natural religion* several times, the only work he had time to publish, and we cannot recollect to have found any thing in it of all that you make him say: But as we were diffident whether this proceeded from forgetfulness on our parts, or mistake on yours, we determined to read it over again from beginning to end. We can now assure you



that none of the reasonings in your note are to be found in this work, and that there is not a word said of those questions, which you discuss on the Pentateuch.

What was you thinking of then, sir, when you put this learned and pious clergyman of the church of England in the list of your criticks, who find absurdities and contradictions in the sacred writings? And do you thus confound him with Bolingbroke, Tindall and Collins? Perhaps the title alone of Woollaston's work lead you into that error, which many of his countrymen fell into: "As soon as a sketch of the  
" treatise *on natural religion* appeared, says the author  
" of *la Bibliotheque Angloise*, the libertine party con-  
" ceived it was a book in their favour: They already  
" triumphed: But their joy, he adds, was short-  
" lived: And upon reading it the publick was unde-  
" ceived."

Bolingbroke and his party were better acquainted with this writer than you, sir, and therefore, tho' they could not avoid doing justice to his extensive knowledge, yet he has often been the object of their bitterest censures: This is a clear proof that he held none of those opinions which they cherished.

This then is the first illustrious name which is to be erased out of your list (1).

§ 2. *Opinion of ABEN EZRA.*

Aben Ezra, you say, was the *first who ventured to affirm, that the Pentateuch was compiled in the time of the kings.*

It is true, that notwithstanding the very general opinion of our doctors in his time, who held that the Pentateuch, even to the last syllable, had been written by Moses, yet this learned critick thought he found some passages in it, which could not belong to

(1) *To be erased out of your list.* We must observe that in the *Nouveaux melanges*, art: *des ecrivains qui ont eu le malheur d'écrire contre la religion*, Woollaston is still inserted in the list, who is there called *Woollaston*: Will the illustrious writer never take the trouble to peruse Woollaston's treatise? A slight glance of this work, and of the preface, would be sufficient to undeceive him. *Edit.*



the holy legislator. He thought they came from an author of later date, who lived probably in the time of the kings. But you will find it hard to prove, that he concluded from this, that these books, were neither written nor compiled until then. To think that some passages of the Pentateuch, were inserted into it in the time of the kings, or to fix to this period the compilation of the whole work, is by no means the same thing.

In order to convict this learned man of so erroneous an opinion, clear and formal texts, extracted from his works, not empty conjectures, would be necessary. If you know any such, sir, we challenge you to produce them.

Whilst you are preparing for this, we may learn from the ingenious father Simon, what we ought to think of this charge, and from whence you have taken it. “ Spinoza, says he, wrongs Aben Ezra, when  
“ he assures us that this Rabbi, did not believe Moses  
“ to be the author of the Pentateuch. What he says  
“ of this Rabbi, and he produces just the same passages you do, proves only that some additions have  
“ been made to certain parts, which have been undoubtedly written by Moses, or in his time,  
“ and by his order. This same Spinoza shews his  
“ ignorance still plainer in, &c. &c.

Upon the whole, if any man should be led from what you say of Aben Ezra, to imagine that he thought and reasoned as your infidel criticks do, he would form a very false judgment of his opinions. His attachment to the religion of his fathers, the high esteem which the synagogue had for him during his life, and the respect which it yet preserves for his memory are clear proofs of his orthodoxy.

Let us add, that learned criticks have shewn, that most even of those passages which you quote after Aben Ezra, and which he thought posterior to Moses, may have come from the pen of that legislator. They give satisfactory proofs of this, which may be seen



(1) in their works. We shall just relate briefly what one of those writers says, whose authority you challenge, *the learned, the famous le Clerc*.

*Aben Ezra*, you say, grounds his doubts on several passages. "The Canaanite was in this country. "The mountain of Moria, (2) called the mountain "of God. The bed of Og, king of Basan, is still "seen in Rabath. And he called all this country of "Basan, the cities of Jair to this day. There never "was seen a prophet in Israel like Moses." He insists that those passages, which speak of things that happened after the time of Moses, could not have been written by him.

Thus *Aben Ezra* reasoned. But *le Clerc* denies that those passages speak of things which happened after the time of Moses. "He says that the first passage which has been ill translated thus, *the Canaanite was then in this country*, may and ought to be "thus translated, *the Canaanite was since that time "in this country*, which was true, even in Abraham's "time, and consequently (3) clears the whole difficulty. That the name of *Moria God will provide*, "given to the mountain, to which the patriarch led "his son to sacrifice him, may have been in use "a short time after this sacrifice, and a long time before Moses. That this legislator, writing probably "some months after the defeat of Og, may have said "that his iron bed was yet preserved in Rabath, and

(1) *In their works*. See *Abbadie*, Dupin, the discourses of bishop Kidder, placed before his notes on the Pentateuch, in which he treats this subject with judgment. *Aut.*

(2) *Called the mountain of God*. Here Mr. Voltaire is a bad interpreter of *Aben Ezra*. This mountain was not called the *mountain of God* on account of Abraham's sacrifice, for this is the common name of all high mountains in Hebrew. It was called *Moria*, that is, *God will provide*, from the remarkable expression of Abraham to his son. The illustrious writer is so taken up with a multitude of objects, that he has not time to attend to these small things. *Edit.*

(3) *Clears the whole difficulty*. Mr. Freret is of the same opinion. He says that "since the time of Abraham, the Canaanites had driven out the ancient "inhabitants of the country, and settled in their place." See the memoirs of the academy of inscriptions. When after such clear solutions, a man brings on again those threadbare objections, may he not be justly charged with want of knowledge or sincerity. *Christ.*



“ that the expressions which are translated, *yet* and to  
 “ *this day*, are sometimes used by ancient writers, fa-  
 “ cred and prophane, to signify a time but little dif-  
 “ tant. That therefore there is nothing in these pas-  
 “ sages but what Moses may have written.”

As to the passage where the kings of Edom and Is-  
 rael are spoken of, and a small number of other pas-  
 sages, he allows that they seem (1) added to the text.  
 But he says, “ that those slight additions, made by  
 “ the prophets who lived after Moses, ought not to  
 “ prevent us from looking upon him as the author  
 “ of the Pentateuch, since there are so many other  
 “ proofs of this, just as the Hebrew antiquities are a-  
 “ scribed to Josephus, although some passages may  
 “ have been inserted (2) by recent hands.” The opi-  
 nion then of Aben Ezra, which only ascribed the  
 texts above quoted to persons after Moses’s time, this  
 opinion I say, which is very different from the one  
 you give him, was ill grounded and false, even ac-  
 cording to the judgment of the learned le Clerc.

(1) *Added to the text.* Other learned men have proved that the Hebrew word, which is translated *king*, might signify, *chief, commander, &c. &c.* And that it has been applied in this sense to some of our *judges*. See Abbadie. This excellent writer has discussed and cleared this objection in such a manner, as leaves no room for a reply. It is very extraordinary, that Mr. Voltaire could take it upon him to produce it again. *Edit.*

(2) *By recent hands.* It appears that le Clerc, had in view the three famous passages concerning John the baptist, Jesus Christ, and St. James. But besides these three texts, which many learned Christians have held to be authentick, there are others which have undoubtedly been added to Josephus; such among others is that one which the Abbe Miquot points out in one of his learned memoirs. It is a parenthesis in which the forger makes Josephus, a pharisee, say just the contrary of what the pharisees thought. See the memoirs of the academy of inscriptions.

Those slight additions, which are found in almost all the ancient writers, give us no reason to deny them to be the authors of such works as are generally ascribed to them.

As we are happy in speaking to a man of letters, who may perhaps relish such observations, we shall give two instances of those additions which have been as yet unnoticed by the criticks.

The first is from Livy. In the sixth book, No. 40. In the middle of Appian’s discourse against the tribunes, we read, “ De indignitate satis dictum est, (*ut enim dignitas ad homines pertinet*) quid de religionibus loquar.” We think this parenthesis, most unworthy of Livy, must have been a poor, ridiculous note, which passed from the margin into the text.

The second is from Virgil. In the ninth book of the *Eneid*, where the poet, after having related the deaths of Nisus and Eurialus, describes the attack of the Rutulians on the Trojan camp, we read in many editions,



§ 3. LE CLERC'S *Opinion*.

After what we have been saying of this celebrated critick, could we expect to find you placing him not only in the list, but at the head of those learned men, who hold that the Pentateuch was not compiled until the time of the kings? And yet this you do in your note, and in several other parts of your works.

We shall not conceal that le Clerc did at first hold this opinion. But if we owed this acknowledgment to truth, were you not under the same obligation to inform your readers that he changed his mind since, and in a riper age openly embraced that opinion which he combated in his youth? Consult, sir, the dissertation he has placed before his commentary on Genesis. There he not only answers the objections of Aben Ezra, as we have shewn, but besides solves those difficulties which he had proposed to himself in the tract called, *Sentimens de quelques theologuins de Hollande*. And when he gives an account of this comment in his *Bibliothèque choisie* he repeats, “That  
“Moses cannot, with any shew of reason, be denied  
“to have been the real author of the Pentateuch,  
“that the passages which have been added afterwards are few in number, that some of them are  
“of a doubtful nature, which learned men have  
“looked on as of a later date than Moses, although  
“without proof.” Judge now, sir, whether it was proper to place this writer without reserve at the head

*Quin ipsa arreptis, visu miserabile in Hassis!  
Præsignant Capita & multo clamore Sequuntur,  
Euryali & Nisi; quantâ mox Gæcæ pianda!*

These last words, *quantâ mox cæde pianda*, were, they say, added by father Vanieros. They have appeared again in an edition of Virgil, printed at Rome, with a new translation in Italian verse by a learned Jesuit. But would not these two ingenious men have shewn more taste, if instead of making an addition to the text, they had retrenched the words, *Euryali & Nisi*? For although they may be found in the best editions, it seems clear to us, that they do not belong to Virgil, but to some annotator, who placed them in the margin.

The greatest part of the additions made to the Pentateuch, are, in like manner, parenthesis, or explanatory notes; with this difference, however, that those who made these latter additions, had character and authority to support them in so doing. *Aut.*



of those, who affirm the Pentateuch to have been written long after Moses.

But even at the very time that he was attached to his first opinion, yet he thought “that there is not any “fact of importance related in the sacred writings that is not true. That the history we read there “is the most veritable and holy that ever was penned; “and that all the doctrines there delivered are truly “from above.”

You might then with good reason fear to accuse this learned critick of impiety. “Nothing says “Chaufepied, incensed him more than the charge of “deism which his enemies sometimes laid to him, “certainly without just grounds. We may judge of “this by the conversation which passed between him “and *Collins*, when this famous Englishman paid him “a visit in Holland, accompanied by some French “*Freethinkers* like himself. They thought it would “be easy to gain over so bold a divine to their side, “but he stood firm for revelation. He pressed those “deists hard, and shewed them that they dissolve the “strongest ties of humanity, that they excite men to “shake off the yoke of laws, that they take away the “most powerful incentives to virtue, and rob the “world of all its comforts. And what do you substitute in the place of these things? added he. You “flatter yourselves, no doubt, (1) that statues will “be erected to you for the mighty services you have “done mankind; but I must declare to you that the “part you act will render you odious and contemptible in the sight of all men!” What lessons these are, sir, may all *Collinses* of our days profit by them!

(1) *That statues will be erected.* We have been wrongfully charged with malice for inserting the above quotation. When we wrote this letter there was no talk of the statue of our illustrious writer, nor of that one on account of which he so bitterly inveighs against the citizen of Geneva, as this latter seemed to think himself worthy of it. The priority of our quotation is a good proof that we did not intend to make any malicious allusions. Could we foresee that our philosophers would have had such a strong desire for statues? *Ant.*



§ 4. NEWTON'S *Opinion*.

We shall say nothing of the opinions of Newton on the authors of the books of *Joshua*, *Judges*, *Ruth*, &c. We have not taken this task upon us, and we allow it to be very difficult to point out the dates and the authors of those books.

As to the Pentateuch, this great man thought that divers facts, such as the copy found in the temple in the reign of Josias; the Levites sent by Jehosaphat with the law, to teach it in the city of Judea; the attachment of the ten tribes, and the respect they paid to these sacred writings, even since their separation; and lastly, the establishment of public worship, in the times of Solomon and David, in a manner so solemn and so conformable to the rites prescribed in the Pentateuch, will not permit us to throw back the compilation of it farther than the reign of Saul. He therefore supposed that the book of the law had been lost when the Philistines, after conquering the Israelites, got possession of the ark. That in order to repair this loss, Samuel had gathered together what remained of the writings of Moses, and the Patriarchs, and that with these materials he had compiled the Pentateuch in the form in which we now see it.

Upon these things we shall observe, 1<sup>st</sup>, That this whole system is built upon an ungrounded supposition and vague conjectures. No doubt the name of the great Newton should always be mentioned with respect. But, however, this great name cannot convert suppositions into facts, and conjectures into proofs.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That this system, as it supposes the book of the law to have been written, and memorials for an history left by Moses and the Patriarchs, contradicts all those empty notions and false reasonings with which the former part of your note is filled.

3<sup>dly</sup>, That although Newton thought the Pentateuch was compiled by Samuel, he was far from charging the accounts in it with absurdity, as your incredulous criticks have presumed to do. The re-



spect which this learned man had for the sacred writings during his whole life is well known. “ This great man, says Mr. Fontenelle, did not rest merely in natural religion ; he was persuaded of revelation, and among those various volumes which he had continually in his hand, that which he read most constantly was the bible.” So far from striving to expose it to the derision of the profane, he studied it, commented upon it, and laboured to clear up the difficulties of it.

What shall we then think, sir, of the manner in which you speak of this illustrious writer, as well as of the learned le Clerc, in your philosophy of history? “ God forbid, say you, that we should dare to accuse the le Clercs, the Newtons, &c. &c. of impiety ! We are convinced that although they did not think the books of Moses, Joshua, &c. were written by these heroes of Israel, yet they were persuaded that they were written by inspiration. They discover the finger of God in every line of Genesis, Joshua, &c. The Jewish writer was but the secretary of God ; God dictated every word ! Newton, no doubt, was of this opinion.” We understand the meaning of this ironical turn. God forbid we should dare to accuse you of calumniating those great men ; but we will confess, that if any thing could lessen the idea we entertain of your probity, it would be the odious suspicions which you endeavour to give us of theirs.

§ 5. *Opinions of SHAFTESBURY and BOLINGBROKE.*

All the learned, of whom we have spoke in the foregoing sections, whatever may have been their opinions on the authors of the Pentateuch, and on the dates of these books, yet give an implicit assent to the indubitable facts contained in them, to their pure morality, their wise laws, and believe the lawgiver to have been instructed and guided by the Spirit of God. Let us now say something of those who have no other view in denying Moses to have been the author of the



Pentateuch, and in censuring its pretended absurdities, than to weaken and destroy the proofs of a revelation. Criticks whose notions are so different, and whose ends are so opposite, should not be confounded, nor put upon the same footing.

*Shaftesbury*, if we believe some of his learned countrymen, was an enemy of revelation, and the more dangerous because in his attacks he (1) seems to profess respect. He never attacks it face to face, or with serious arguments, but with raillery and ironical reflections, which look as if they fell by chance. He continually protests that "he firmly believes all the facts and doctrines which are discovered by revelation. He is convinced that our religion is divine, and our sacred writings inspired; that every human understanding should bow down to them, and that none but libertines and profane men could absolutely deny, or dispute the authority of a line, or a syllable in these holy books." This is a kind of an attack which favours more of cunning than of candour, and more of stratagem than of true learning. He followed the method of some unbelievers who went before him, and other modern freethinkers like it so much, as you well know, sir, that we meet (2) it in every page of their writings. But these threadbare stratagems, this old way of making war, cannot deceive any body now. The world is weary of seeing men fighting under a mask, and would think an open attack here after more honourable.

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(1) *Seems to profess respect.* The illustrious writer whom we answer, says in his *Nouveaux Melanges*, that *Shaftesbury* far outdid *Herbert* and *Hobbes* in boldness and stile. As to *stile* it is true; but as to *boldness*, the author of the *Melanges* is the only writer who says it. How comes he to be so little acquainted with an author to whom he has many obligations? *Shaftesbury*, in his attacks on revelation, uses so much circumspection, he hides and wraps himself up so artfully, that some learned men have censured Doctor Leland for having placed him in his list of deistical writers. See his *Deistical Writers*, an excellent work, where he gives a much juster account of the English deists than the author of *les Melanges*. He presents you with an extract of their works, briefly answers their objections, and quotes those writers who have answered them more fully. *Edit.*

(2) *In every page of their writings.* In those, for instance, of Mr. Voltaire. This great man, whilst he borrows the objections and raileries of *Shaftesbury*, does not think it beneath him to imitate his little stratagems. *Christ.*



We may then suppose that Shaftesbury, notwithstanding all his protestations, did not believe the Pentateuch to have been written by Moses, or any other inspired writer. But what is certain, what we can affirm, after having read over all his treatises carefully several times, is, that although many passages are found there which may have served you for models on other subjects, we cannot point out one that has any relation to the arguments in your note, on the imaginary impossibility of Moses's writing that work, or the pretended absurdity of the facts which he relates. Why then would you ascribe such things to him, and quote his authority when you are doubtful of it? Some careless, indifferent readers may be imposed on, but no one can be deceived who will take the pains to recur to the sources.

Let us proceed to *Bolingbroke*. He was not like Shaftesbury, a pleasing jester and secret enemy of the revelation which was made to our fathers. More serious and sincere, he attacks it openly and without discretion as without disguise. He speaks sometimes of the Christian revelation with a seeming respect; but as soon as the Jewish comes in question, and especially the books of Moses, (1) he exceeds all bounds; the most indecent invectives, and the falsest arguments flow from his pen.

When we read his works, we see that you have tried this spring, and have not hesitated sometimes to draw from it. But can we help being surprised when we find that, except one short reflection, nothing at all is found in his works of what you make him say in your note. And have we not reason to conclude, that you very improperly subscribed his name, as well as that of Shaftesbury, to that heap of false assertions with which you have filled it.

(1) *He exceeds all bounds.* We read in the *Nouveaux Melanges*, that *Bolingbroke* is a bold writer, that his writings are violent, that he detested the Christian religion. Compare these expressions and confessions with the *Defence* of Lord *Bolingbroke*. *Chri.*



§ 5. *Opinions of COLLINS and TINDAL.*

*Collins* and *Tindal* are then really your only vouchers, out of all the writers you have named. And yet we know not but they might be disputed.

We have formerly read over *Collins's* works, and we do not remember to have found the arguments you ascribe to him. We do not even see what relation they could have to the questions he treats. But our memory may be weak as well as our conjectures.

However, this writer is an authority which we will freely resign to you. We know how often his countrymen have reproached him, (1) proof in hand, "with altering texts, with adding to, and retrenching from them as he thought proper, then bringing those mangled parts together in order to form a meaning quite different from that of the author's whom he quotes. With never being more positive than when he is in the wrong; with answering the strongest proofs only with cavils and poor jokes." These features, by which he bears a strong likeness to some writers of the same party, are not those of a fair critick, who sincerely searches for truth himself, that he may make it known to others.

Of all *Tindal's* works we have not had it in our power to read any but his *Christianity as old as the creation*. In this the author attacks equally the Jewish and Christian revelation. He there censures many passages of our sacred writings; but we can answer for it he makes none of those difficulties mentioned in your note. We observed besides an air of moderation kept up through his whole work, for which we owe him some thanks. He does not, in any place, give way to those abusive appellations and bitter sallies, which other writers are subject to, and which always are the signs of envenomed spirits and violent characters.

(1) *Proof in hand*: See especially what the Bishop of Winchester has wrote against *Collins*, and the learned observations of Dr. Bently on the *Discourse on Freethinking*. They were translated into French by Mr. de la Chappelle under the title of *Friponnerie laique des pretendus Esprits forts d'Angleterre*. Edit.



The other writings of this free-thinker are only known to us by the extract and confutation which Dr. Leland has given us of them. As this learned man confutes none of those objections which you ascribe to Tindal in your note, we have reason to believe that he never made them. Had you been sure that they were his, you certainly ought, for the instruction of your readers, to have named the *book* and *page*. You say somewhere that *you do not like such exact quotations*. You certainly have good grounds for your dislike; and yet such quotations are useful. It is true that attention and labour are required to render them exact, and you have other things to mind besides comparing passages. We see it plainly.

Such, sir, have been the opinions of the writers quoted in your note. Judge yourself whether you have set them forth with the exactness of a knowing critick, and whether it was impartial in you to impute opinions to some which they never held, to conceal the change of opinion of others, to throw out doubts on the sincerity of those, and to ascribe to these arguments which they never made? &c. &c. These arguments, therefore, being false, are not supported by any satisfactory authority, and the authenticity of the books of Moses, as well as the truths of those facts which you attack, rest on a solid basis.

“ When the learned and the ignorant, princes and  
“ shepherds, shall appear, after this short life, before  
“ the master of eternity, each of us will then wish to  
“ have been just, merciful, generous.” You are  
right, sir; knowledge will not avail without practical  
virtue, nor faith in doctrines without the observance  
of duties. “ No one will pride himself in having  
“ known precisely in what year the Pentateuch was  
“ written.” No, certainly, for this piece of know-  
ledge was never looked on in the light of an obliga-  
tion. “ God will never ask us whether we were of  
“ the opinion of the Mazorites against the Talmud,  
“ or whether we may not have mistaken a caph for  
“ a beth, or a yod for a vau,” &c. &c. No, cer-



tainly ; and this is not altogether the subject of your note. You deviate from the main question, or you wish to mislead your readers. "He will judge us according to our works, and not according to our proficiency in the Hebrew." Who doubts it? But if a writer, with a superficial knowledge of this language, and of the history of God's people, should be bold enough to rise up against his sacred oracles, and to calumniate his word ; if he represented the books which contain it as an ill-digested heap of false facts, absurd stories, barbarous actions, &c. &c. if he prostituted the most shining talents in striving to eradicate from the heart of man that obedience which he owes to the divine laws, would he not be guilty in the sight of God? We propose this question to you the more willingly, because we do not think you included in it. All your writings are full of protestations of your submission to, and respect for revelation. We have no right to doubt but that they are as sincere as they appear edifying to us.

We are, &c.



## LETTER X.

*On the reproach which the author casts on the ancient Jews, that bestiality was common among them.*

**I**N the latter part of your pretended *useful note*, you no longer speak after the real or supposed opinions of some celebrated writers, but (1) after your own sentiments. You pass suddenly to a text of Leviticus, which has no relation to the questions you have been treating, and this with no other view but to vilify a people whom you detest. From hence you take occasion to lay abominations to the charge of our fathers, the mere thought of which strikes one with horror; and you assert that these shocking practices were not only known, but *common among them*. This charge, if it was well grounded, ought to make the world look on them as the most infamous nation that ever existed upon earth.

The more scandalous an accusation is, the more reason there is for requiring convincing proofs of it. If yours are of this nature, we hereby consent for ourselves and our fathers, may their memory be blasted before the universe, and may the shame of the ancestors fall on their descendants! But if every impartial reader shall find them weak or false, we appeal to your own equity. Judge yourself what reparation you owe to a whole nation that has been so cruelly and unjustly abused.

§ 1 *Whether the author can prove by the 17th chapter of Leviticus, that the crime in question was common among our forefathers.*

*The Book of Leviticus, you say, sir, orders the Jews no longer to worship the hairy he-goats, with which they*

(1) *After your own sentiments.* Monsieur Voltaire does not quote Bolingbroke here; and yet it is probable that he borrowed from him this charge against our fathers. However, Bolingbroke was more moderate, he only charges the Hebrews with a *proneness* to this vice. The French writer is not so cautious. *Edit.*



*have committed infamous abominations.* On this passage you seem first to lean. But in good earnest do you think it clear and explicit enough to found so weighty an accusation on it? Is it very certain that it must be understood in the sense you give it, and in no other? This I think, before all things, you ought to have been sure of. Now I find that the Hebrew word which you translate by *hairy*, has no determined sense in the sacred language. That many ancient versions, the Greek, the Vulgate, the Chaldaick, and many learned interpreters and commentators give it different senses. That some of them render it by the *malevolent* and the *devils*; others, by *vanities* and *idols*, &c. It is not therefore indisputable that it signifies only the *hairy*.

But although your sense of the word should be the most probable, or even the only true one, would it be a sufficient proof that the worship of (1) he-goats is meant in the text? And might we not say with equal probability that here is meant the worship of monkeys, cats, dogs, &c. in short, of hairy animals in general, and perhaps in particular of the bull *Apis*, which the Hebrews had been lately worshipping?

Here are already some reasons for doubting. But this is not all. The Hebrew expression which signifies only, *after whom they have gone a whoring*, and which you translate by this paraphrase *with which they have committed infamous abominations*; this expression, I say, is taken by a great number of the most learned interpreters, in a sense purely metaphorical, and signifies in this, as in many other parts of scripture, spiritual whoredom, the disloyalty of wavering minds, who abandon the worship of God, for that of

(1) *He-goats.* By the *hairy*, says Mr. Voltaire in his *Defense de mon oncle*; we must absolutely understand *he-goats*. We do not think this of absolute necessity; and as we have seen above, many learned men have doubted it. It seems to us that there is in this case only a probability. But even this sense does not authorize the scandal which the illustrious writer casts on the ancient Jews. *Edm.*



false deities, or who form out of both (1) a sacrilegious union. Might not the authority of those learned men be a good counterpoise to your's?

We shall add that this metaphorical sense seems better connected, than the literal one, with what goes before. God, in this passage, forbids the Israelites to offer their victims in any other place than before the tabernacle: *To the end*, says the text, *that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, even that they may bring them unto the Lord, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the Lord. And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, or idols, or if you please to the hairy, which this faithless people worshipped.* This passage, thus translated, presents you with a natural and complete sense. The sacrifices which the Hebrews were hereafter to offer to the Lord before the tabernacle, are put in opposition to those which they had offered to devils, or *to the hairy in the open field*. On the contrary, nothing requires or introduces the sense which you think proper to substitute, and which the ancient interpreters never knew.

We grant sir, that some learned commentators have understood this passage (2) in your sense; but as others, not less learned, more ancient, and more numerous, interpret it otherwise, it would have been but fair in you not to conceal this difference of opinions. Although it might have taken from your proofs, yet your criticism would have looked more impartial.

Upon the whole, none of those learned men have inferred from the text, that these abominations

(1) *A sacrilegious union* Mr. Voltaire himself, speaking of the apostacies of Jerusalem and Samaria, says that *these apostacies were often represented as whoredom, as adultery!* *Aut.*

(2) *In your sense.* Some commentators have had odd notions. These particular opinions are always adopted by the critick, and represented as the general opinion. By this means he casts a ridicule on the text. He greedily seizes such opportunities. Poor stratagem! *Edit.*



were (1) *common*. This conclusion, which certainly does not flow from the premises, was left for you to draw.

§ 2. *Whether the custom of sorcerers worshipping an he goat, is derived from the ancient Jews.*

We have just seen, sir, that your first proof, supported by an obscure text, susceptible of various meanings, is by no means conclusive. Nevertheless as if it was incontestible, you look into it for the origin of that infamous worship which you charge upon our fathers. And you seem to insinuate that they were the authors of it.

You go on. (2) *We cannot say whether this strange worship came from Egypt, the native country of sorcery and superstition, but, &c. &c.*

We know, sir, that that part of Egypt which was inhabited by the Jews, was not far distant from the nome or canton of Mendes, and that the people of this nome worshipped he-goats. Plutarch, Strabo, Pindar, &c. who informs us of this, have also told us the abominations which sometimes accompanied this worship. Therefore we know, or at least have good reason to suspect, that if some of the Hebrews gave themselves up to these horrid superstitions, they

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(1) *Were common*. According to Mr. Voltaire, *défense de mon oncle*, his uncle asserted that this act had been *very uncommon* in the wilderness. According to himself in his note, it was *common*. How shall we reconcile the uncle and the nephew? *Edit.*

(2) *We cannot say*. Mr. Voltaire says here, that it is uncertain whether this strange worship came from Egypt, and in his *défense de mon oncle*, he asserts that *this custom of worshipping an he-goat, &c. comes from the Hebrews, who borrowed it from the Egyptians*. Thus *we cannot say, and yet we are certain*. The learned critick has the art of reconciling certainty and doubt with regard to the same objects.

The reason he gives to shew that the Jews borrowed this custom from the Egyptians is curious. It is, he says, because *the Jews never invented any thing*. We do not envy the Egyptians the glory of such inventions; but we could wish from our hearts that Mr. Voltaire could agree a little better with himself, or, according to the English phrase, could be a little less *inconsistent*. *Edit.*

A propos Mr. Voltaire renders this English word, in his defence of Lord Bolingbroke by the word *impossible*. This is a small mistake; inconsistent does not signify impossible, it is applied to a man who contradicts himself, or to things incompatible, or to contradictory propositions. *Edit.*

See also the poem on Lisbon, where the author quotes in his notes, a passage of *Shafesbury's characteristics*, and falls into the same mistake. *Christ*



may have been led into it by the example of the Egyptians, and that this *strange worship* may probably have come from them.

*But it is supposed that the custom among our pretended sorcerers of going to nocturnal meetings, for the purpose of worshipping an he-goat, and of giving themselves up to such inconceivable uncleanness with it, as is shocking to conception, came from the ancient Jews.*

*It is supposed.* Such are your proofs, sir, *it is supposed.* You are free to believe this, and others are as free to believe the contrary.

*The custom among our pretended sorcerers, if they are pretended sorcerers, the nocturnal meeting must be a pretended one too, the worship of the he goat pretended, all then is pretended, and nothing real. This is a fine foundation for so weighty a charge!*

Besides the ancient Jews, as you say in many places, *acknowledged neither good nor bad angels, and consequently no satan, no devil.* How then could the custom of worshipping him under the figure of an he-goat come from them? *Certainly men who do not acknowledge the devil, cannot worship the devil. These absurd reproaches are (1) intolerable!*

But you say, *they taught magic in a great part of Europe.* What, the ancient Jews? they who did not acknowledge the devil, taught magick!

At most, these could be only Hellenistick Jews, *who were instructed in the opinions of the Greeks, and who worshipped devils a little before (2) the reign of Herod.* But the superstitions of those Hellenistick

(1) *Are intolerable.* In these very words, Mr. Voltaire justifies the Brachmans against the great Rousseau. See additions to the Universal History.

He adds, that *the devil has never been worshipped in any part of the world.* How does he reconcile this assertion with what he says of the ancient Jews, who according to him, *believed in no devils, and yet worshipped the devil.* We think that some readers will suspect him for falling into the same absurdity, which he charges on his antagonist. He does not appear to have any advantage over him, except that of contradicting himself more clearly. *Edit.*

(2) *Before the reign of Herod.* See Diction. Philosoph. He says in another place, Philosophie de l'Histoire, article, *Anges.* The Jews acknowledged no devils until the Babylonish captivity. *They acquired this doctrine among the Persians.* Nothing but ignorance and fanaticism can deny these facts. If it had been the express intent of this writer, to lay down the most contradictory propositions, could he have had better success? *Edit.*



Jews, who are of much later date than the ancient Jews, are no proof at all against these latter.

In short, if it is true that some of the modern Jews, *have given themselves out for magicians, and taught these absurd arts in Europe*, they had this trade in common with many other nations, the Babylonians, Egyptians, the Persians, and even with some philosophers. For philosophy has also had its doctors in magick, its maximins and iamblichuses, who believed in enchantments, and published forms for raising the devil.

*What a nation! so extraordinary a crime seemed to deserve a punishment equal to that which the golden calf brought on them, and yet the legislator is satisfied with giving them only a simple prohibition. This fact is mentioned merely to show what the Jewish nation is.*

But read, sir, what Moses commands on this subject in the same book. *That whoever commits any of these abominations, shall be cut off from the midst of his people*, Leviticus, ch. 12. ver. 29. And that, *they shall surely be put to death, their blood shall be upon them.* ch. 20. v. 15.

*So extraordinary a crime seemed to deserve, &c. &c.* You are too modest, sir, it certainly deserves it. Since then no such thing happened to them, this is a proof that those abominations were never practised, or at least, were very uncommon amongst them. This is the only fair inference from these premises, but you on the other hand, sir, hence conclude that these pollutions were *common* amongst them.

If a man was to reason according to your logic about the shepherds of Calabria, and cry out, *What a nation these Calabrians! This fact is mentioned merely to shew what the Calabrians are*, would you think this argument just? Did any one ever form a notion of a people by the ill conduct of a few individuals, more especially when the laws condemn this ill conduct?

§ 3. *Whether the law which forbade bestiality among the Jews, is an evidence that this crime was common amongst them.*



*Bestiality, you say, must have been common among the Jews, since this is the only nation we know, in which the laws were under the necessity of prohibiting a crime, which has not been suspected in any other place, by any legislator.*

No, sir, it was not necessary that these monstrous pollutions, should have been common among the Jews to make Moses forbid them. It was sufficient that they had spread among those nations, whose lands they were going to possess, as the promised land, to induce the legislator to guard his people against those crimes, by clear laws, and severe penalties. Now this is the motive which Moses himself gives for these prohibitions.

*Defile not yourselves, saith he, speaking in the person of God, in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled, therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of those abominations, neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you. For all these abominations have the men of the land done which were before you, and the land is defiled. That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them, shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that ye commit not any of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein. I am the Lord your God. Levit. ch. 18. v. 24. &c. &c.*

And lower. *And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nations which I cast out before you, for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. Chap. 20. v. 23. &c.*

Is it not evident that the legislator, so far from supposing this crime common, or even known among the Hebrews, manifests no other intention but to pre-



serve them from the examples which they were going to have before their eyes? And that if he had foreseen your imputations, he could not have explained himself more clearly in order to prevent them?

You add, that the *Jews were the only nation we know, in which the laws were under the necessity of prohibiting this crime.*

But 1st, sir, have you a very extensive knowledge of the legislation of ancient nations? Are there many of them that have left us a compleat system of their laws? We have just some scattered wrecks of those of Greece. What conclusion then can you draw from all those codes which no longer exist? Even how many modern nations are there with whose laws you are unacquainted?

2dly, It is well known that this crime was spread over Palestine; ancient historians inform us, that it was not unknown in the Indies, and to the scandal of human nature, it was, in some degree, consecrated by religion in Egypt, &c. If the laws of those nations prohibited it, then the Jewish nation was not the only one in which the legislator forbid it. If they did not, I ask, which of those were the wisest laws, those which were silent with respect to this pollution, that does violence to humanity, and which they knew was committed, or, those which wished to prevent it, by forbidding it under the severest penalties?

3dly, It was expressly forbidden by the Roman laws (1) in the time of the emperors.

4thly, But let us go no farther than your own religion, and your own country. When I look over your treatises *de droit criminel*, I find in them decisions and rules, forms of proceeding and decrees on this subject. And this maxim is generally received

(1) *In the time of the Emperors.* There is a passage which we must quote from memory, as we have not those laws before us. *In eos qui venerem vertunt in alteram formam jubemus insurgere leges & armari gladio ultore, ut debitum pœnis subdantur infames.* Probably this is the passage which our authors have in view. See the Civil Laws of Domat. *Edit.*



in them, that this crime is to be punished by the most cruel death in use amongst you. Surely all this is equal, in effect, to that law you reproach us with!

But if we pass from your treatises of civil law, to your books of ecclesiastical law, we see this crime mentioned every where. In your *Penitential Canons*, and in those lists of sins, which you call *Examins de Conscience*, and in your canonists, your casuists, your moral theologians, &c. from the letter of Basil to Amphilochius, down to the *ecclesiastical laws* of Hericourt, and from the tax of the Roman chancery chamber, down to the *casus reservati*, which are printed in your last forms of prayer abridged. And now you, a Frenchman and a Christian, come and tell us that the Jewish nation was the only one in which this crime was prohibited. Truly you are but ill acquainted with the two kinds of jurisprudence in your country!

From what we have reported of your laws, we are far from drawing such a conclusion as you do with regard to our fathers, that therefore this crime is *common* amongst you. No, we see that this consequence would be unfair, and that a law which prohibits an infamous crime, is by no means a proof that this crime is *common* among the people to whom this prohibition is given. The drawing such a conclusion from the prohibition given to the Jews, is shewing a partiality the more cruel, as by this very law, the legislator seems to justify his people, and only to accuse the neighbouring nations.

§ 4. *Whether the residence of the Hebrews in the wilderness could be the cause of that proneness, which the author ascribes to them, towards these transgressions. That the law which excepts marriageable women from massacres, does not prove that women were wanting in the wilderness.*

*There is reason to believe, you say, that by the fatigues and distresses which the Jews suffered in the deserts of Paran, Horeb and Cades-Barné, the female species may have failed totally. It is clear that*



*the Jews must have wanted women, since they are always commanded to kill every thing except marriageable women. The Arabs, who still inhabit part of those deserts, always stipulate in the treaties which they make with the Caravans, that they shall give them marriageable women.*

*There is reason to believe. Thus to establish a fact which would require the strongest proofs, you are reduced to beliefs and probabilities! And what sort of probabilities too!*

We cannot deny that our fathers experienced fatigues and distresses in the wilderness, of which they often complained. But as we have before observed, these hardships, which you are pleased to exaggerate, amounted only to this, that they travelled four or five hundred leagues in forty years. Was this sufficient to make the *female species* totally fail? As to the wants which they experienced, scripture informs us, that as soon as they became urgent, God relieved them, with a fatherly goodness. That providence supplied every thing they needed. That they had a sufficiency of food, raiment, and of every thing else. *Nihil illis defuit*, says your vulgate version. Where then was this fatal and destructive penury, of which you talk so loud?

*It is clear that the Jews must have wanted women since they are always commanded to reserve, &c. &c.* It is not given to us, to see the justness of this conclusion. If the Jews were always commanded to spare marriageable women, this was not because they wanted women, but because there never are too many women where polygamy is permitted, as it was among our fathers.

The example of the Arabians, which you produce in your favour, proves I think directly against you. Pray, sir, have the Arabians no women, or have *the fatigues of the wilderness made the female species totally fail* amongst them, every time they stipulate for a gift of marriageable women? No certainly, but the plurality of wives, which their law autho-



rizes, has at all times, rendered the female species precious amongst them.

For this same reason, the permission granted to the Israelites, of reserving marriageable women, was not confined to that space of time, in which they sojourned in the wilderness, but was extended to all times, although probably they could not always be in want of women, *by reason of the fatigues and distresses of the wilderness.*

And when you say, that *it was a perpetual injunction to the Israelites, to kill every thing except marriageable women*, you either err again or you knowingly give your readers a false idea of our laws. No, sir, these sanguinary orders were not *always* given us. We shall soon have occasion (1) to prove this to you. And even when we were, on certain occasions ordered to kill all except women, *marriageable women* were not the only ones excepted from the slaughter. The exception comprehended all (2) *maidens*, reckoning from their earliest years. These words are by no means synonymous; the one has somewhat more extent than the other, and it would have been proper (3) not to confound them.

Thus, facts at least doubtful, an obscure text which so far from proving that these crimes were *common* among the Hebrews, scarcely infers the existence of them, and, lastly, a prohibition, the motive of which, clearly expressed in the law, contradicts your inference from it. These are the grounds of a shocking accusation!

(1) *To prove this to you.* See below, *Letters on the divine law of the Jews.* A perpetual injunction, to kill every thing except marriageable women. We do not understand Mr. Voltaire. How can a man, who loves truth, propose coolly and so often repeat such false assertions! *Edit.*

(2) *All maidens.* Mr. Voltaire says in another place, that *the custom of the Israelites was to reserve all maidens.* *Aut.*

(3) *Not to confound them.* Yes, but it was the illustrious writer's interest to do it. He wanted to represent our fathers as *Barbarians*, and the proof becomes stronger by limiting the persons to be spared, when cities were stormed to marriageable women. This lamentation is false, contradicted by our sacred writings, and by his own confusion. But true or false, every thing is useful when the Jews are to be declaimed against. *Edits*



You must have been conscious to yourself, of the falsehood of those imputations. You must have perceived it better than any one. But no matter, the Jews are detested, and they must be rendered odious, under the most trifling pretences. To calumniate them is a pleasure, and the amusement of your tender philosophy. Alas, sir, what delight can a feeling mind take in abusing an unhappy nation! O apostle of toleration and humanity, is it thus that you put in practice that universal benevolence which you preach!

It is time, you say, affectionately to your (1) countrymen, *it is time that we should drop that odious custom of calumniating all sects, and insulting all nations.* We hope, sir, that you will vouchsafe to set them an example of this in your new edition; and that by the help of more knowledge and less prejudice, *you will give glory to that truth which you love.*

We remain, &c. &c.

(1) To your countrymen. See the additions to the Universal History, page 12. Ant.



LETTERS

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# L E T T E R S

FROM

C E R T A I N J E W S

OF THE

GERMAN and POLISH SYNAGOGUE,

at AMSTERDAM,

To Mr. V O L T A I R E.

S E C O N D P A R T.

Containing some OBSERVATIONS on the two Chapters of the TREATISE ON TOLERATION, which concern the JEWS.

L E T T E R I.

*Scope of this Second Part.*

S I R,

**I**F any one on the earth can wish well to toleration; it must be an unfortunate people, whose religion has exposed them for so many centuries to the most dispiriting contempt and most cruel persecution. Romans, Persians, Saracens, Christians, Mahometans, every nation and sect have successively raised its arm against us, and from the Nile to the Vistula, from the Tagus to the Euphrates, every country has seen our blood flowing. Must not those who have been so often the melancholy victims of superstition detest its fury?



We are very far then, sir, from condemning those principles of universal toleration which are scattered thro' your treatise. On the contrary, those very principles, that spirit of indulgence which runs through it, those mild counsels which you give to rulers, endear it to us, and make us fond of it, and eager to read it, notwithstanding the invectives which you throw out in it against our fathers and ourselves.

Neither the violence of your prejudices, nor the obstinacy of your hatred, shall make us lose sight of justice. We freely acknowledge that your work displays, in some parts, the colouring of a great master, and the wise views of a philosopher, who is a friend to human nature. Who can read without tears the fatal story which gave (1) birth to your treatise! Or who can view without horror the pictures you draw in it of fanaticism! So many assassinations, massacres, bloody wars, which this monster has produced in your own country, and in the rest of the world! What a pity it is that so interesting a subject can not come before the reader, without a mixed crowd of reflections foreign to the subject, of doubtful facts, of confused ideas, and gross errors, which one cannot avoid looking upon as voluntary!

It is the province of men of letters, and of Christians, to point out those errors which may be found in this work concerning the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, the Christians and their martyrs; even concerning the history of your own country, &c. &c.

But there are two chapters in it which although they are far below the rest of the work, yet deserve a particular attention from us. They are those in

(1) *Gave birth to your treatise.* The protection which Mr. Voltaire has given to the innocent and unfortunate family in question, whom he has supported by his credit, and defended by his eloquent writings, is a noble passage in the life of this illustrious writer, and his highest triumph. None can join more sincerely in the universal applause due to him than we do. He was the first who raised his voice in the favour of innocence. *Aut.*



which you strive to prove a toleration by the example of the Jewish nation. We have found so many mistakes in them, or rather (the word escapes us) so many falsehoods of every kind, concerning objects which cannot be indifferent to us, that we have thought ourselves under a necessity of answering them. This shall be the subject of the second part of those letters.

We cannot insist on this too openly. We are enemies to persecution, not only through interest, but also by character and principle; and we do not by any means attack the principle of toleration. We only mean to shew you that you give bad proofs of it. This is our first point.

But whoever will read over your two chapters, with any degree of attention, will perceive, that besides the end which you openly profess, you have another in view, which though not less apparent, is not less real. You want to bring under this head, as well as you can, a heap of little cavils against our sacred writings, which you squeeze in right or wrong. As these small criticisms, collected out of Bolingbroke, Morgan, Tindal, &c. (who themselves borrowed these from others) are your chief study; we shall consider them with proper attention. As you are never weary of repeating them, we must not be weary of answering them. This is our second point in view.

We give you this assurance in sincerity, sir, it hurts us much to attack a writer whom we could wish rather to admire. But that very superiority of talents you possess, is to us a sufficient reason for our not being silent. We have too often experienced that the name of a great man may give authority to error, and strength to prejudice.

We remain, with the strongest sentiments of esteem and respect, &c.



## LETTER II.

*Considerations on the ritual laws of the Jews.*

**U**NDER pretence of proceeding methodically, in your two chapters, you begin, fir, by some preliminary reflections on our divine law. You artfully take this occasion of censuring it. We shall take this opportunity of defending it. By what we shall say, you will be enabled to see how just your criticisms are.

§ 1. *Whether it is inconceivable that God should have given more commands to Moses than to Abraham, and more to Abraham than to Noah.*

You begin by one of those ironical strokes which you look upon as victorious reasoning, with a view to throw a general doubt on the divinity of our legislation. “Let us not presume to enquire here, you say, why it pleased God to substitute a new law in the place of that which he had given to Moses, and why he gave more commands to Moses than to the patriarch Abraham, and more to Abraham than to Noah. In this he seems to have accommodated himself to times, and to the state of population amongst the inhabitants of the earth. This is a gradation of paternal love. But these are depths too great for our weak faculties to fathom! I shall therefore confine myself within the bounds of my subject.”

You would have done well, fir, to confine yourself to it. It was an interesting subject, worthy of the whole attention of your readers. Why would you make them lose sight of it by reflections that have no relation to it?

Certainly, fir, you do not expect from us that we should undertake to prove that a new law has been substituted in place of the Mosaic. This is not one of the tenets of our faith. We are highly pleased to



find such a learned christian as you forming doubts concerning this substitution. We think it sufficient to say a few words of the astonishment you express, *that Moses received more commands from God than Abraham, and Abraham more than Noah.*

Your surprize, sir, arises from your not attending to this point, that the circumstances in which Abraham found himself were very different from those of Noah; and that the situation of Moses differed from that of Abraham. Noah and his family, the only persons saved after the flood, were in no need of particular rites to distinguish them from other men who no longer existed. And Moses who had the government of an immense people on his hands, not like Abraham, the management of a single family, necessarily wanted more laws. Is it therefore so hard to conceive that new circumstances must have required new laws, and new wants called for new helps? Was it necessary that God, in order to appear to you to act reasonably, should give a rite to Noah which was the token of his alliance with Abraham? Or, that he should give to Abraham those laws which were intended for the government of a nation which did not then exist? If these are *the depths which your weak faculties cannot fathom*, they are *weak* indeed!

Perhaps you hold, that God cannot command, or that when he does, he cannot accommodate himself to the particular times and wants of his creatures. That when he declares his will, he must do it without reserve. That he is not at liberty to keep in store, for future circumstances, hopes hereafter to be given, and commands hereafter to be promulged. And that he cannot enjoin or forbid things which, although in themselves indifferent, might become useful or hurtful according to circumstances. These assertions, which contradict the general belief of mankind, ought to be proved before they are credited, and jests are not proofs.

Endeavour, sir, to produce some proofs: We pledge ourselves to answer them, but we give you



this fair notice, repeat not those of Tindal. The empty reasonings of that deist, which were at first displayed with so much confidence, have been completely answered by his learned countrymen, Foster, Leland, Conybeare, &c. &c. Something more solid must hereafter be produced.

§ 2. *False idea which the learned critic would give us of the divine law among the Jews.*

“ But, you say, if God, after having given laws  
“ can add new ones to them, surely he can add none  
“ but such as are worthy of him. Now is that which  
“ is called the divine law of the Jews worthy of  
“ God? Is it worthy of a divine legislator?”

This might be doubted, if we were to judge of it according to the idea you form to yourself of it, or rather according to the idea which you would impose on your readers. But is this idea just?

“ By the divine law I understand, you say, those  
“ laws which have been given by God himself. He  
“ ordained that the Jews should eat a lamb dressed  
“ with lettuce, and standing with a staff in their  
“ hands in remembrance of the passover. That the  
“ consecration of the high-priest should be performed  
“ by touching the tip of his right ear, his right hand,  
“ and his right foot with blood. These are to us  
“ extraordinary customs, but not so to antiquity.  
“ He also forbade eating all fish without scales, swine,  
“ hare, hedge-hog, griffins, ixions, &c.

“ He also instituted their feasts and ceremonies.  
“ All those things which seemed arbitrary to other  
“ nations, and subject to positive law and custom,  
“ when commanded by God himself, became to the  
“ Jews a divine law, (1) just as whatever Jesus

(1) *To the Jews a divine law.* Mr. Voltaire seems to make an opposition between the divine and the positive law. This is a mistake. The divine law of the Jews is distinguished into divine natural law, which comprehends the moral laws, founded in the nature of things, and into divine positive law which comprehends the ceremonial laws, the laws of civil polity, &c. which are founded merely on the good will and pleasure of God. He seems also, as well as Tindal, to confound positive with arbitrary laws, and to understand, as he does, by arbitrary laws, laws of mere caprice, and which have no motive nor reasonable object. In this case both he and Tindal are mistaken.



“Christ, the son of Mary and the Son of God, has  
“commanded, is to us a divine law !”

Thus, sir, you describe our divine law. This whole legislation, the object of respect for so many ages, is nothing, according to you, but an heap of vain observances and superstitious customs. Such is the picture you give of them, similar in this respect to the work of those ill-natured painters who employ the art of profile with no other view than to represent the object they hate on the most unfavourable side.

But are these ritual laws, which you quote, only the divine law of the Jews? Are they the principal and most essential parts of it? Our prophets every where say the contrary. The decalogue, that most excellent compendium of morality, and so many other admirable precepts on the duties of man towards God, towards himself, and towards his fellow-creatures, are the foundation and first part of this law; and whatever wise rules are given for external worship, and for every thing that concerns it, on the authority of magistrates, on inheritances and suits, trials, on the manner of making peace or war, &c. in a word, on the whole administration, ecclesiastical, civil, and political, these are the second part. You present us with an inadequate and false idea of our divine law, when you confine it to rites and ceremonies, just as if you said that to dip in water, or to shed water on the head was the divine law of Christians; or, as if in order to point out Mr. Voltaire, we were to say the author of *Zulima* or *Olympia*, not the author of the *Henriade* or of *Zara*. If we acted in this manner, sir, would our proceeding look impartial? And would you not find in it more malice than candour?

Positive laws are those which prohibit or command things in their nature indifferent; but things in themselves indifferent, may be commanded or prohibited in certain circumstances, for wise views, and reasonable motives.

*Edm.* *U*pon the same principle, it is said, that a man may be commanded to do a thing which is in itself indifferent, but which is necessary for the good of the community.



§ 3. *Vain efforts of the critick to render the ritual laws of the Jews ridiculous. The eating of the paschal lamb. The consecration of the high-priest.*

You are not satisfied with giving a false idea of our divine laws, you endeavour to ridicule them.

Our rites seem to you *extraordinary customs*. Are you then one of those simple people who, never having gone from home, think all foreign customs odd? Or who, confined within the narrow circle of their own time, deem nothing reasonable but what is like the present things? The custom of eating the paschal lamb, standing, with a stick in the hand, appears strange to you; but could there be any thing better adapted to recal to the minds of the Hebrews their departure out of Egypt, and the wonders which (1) accompanied it?

And what matters it, I pray you, whether an high priest is consecrated *by putting blood on his right ear*, or by pouring oil on his hands? All rites are essentially equal. It is the sanctity of religion which imprints an august character on them. To be offended at these customs of an ancient people, to find these usages extraordinary, is to imitate a child who is frightened, or a coxcomb who gives a smile of contempt at a foreign dress!

§ 4. *Animals forbidden to the Jews. Reasons for these prohibitions.*

“ God, you say jestingly, forbid eating fishes  
“ without scales, swine, hares, hedge-hogs, owls,  
“ &c.

Well, Sir, what is there ridiculous in this, that unwholesome food should have been prohibited by wise laws, and that other kinds of it, which might appear pleasing to certain nations, should have been

(1) *Which accompanied it.* This rite, peculiar to the Jewish nation, the institution of which went as far back as the time of their departure, is an incontestible proof of those facts of which it recals the memory. This custom then was wisely appointed by the legislator. *Aut.*



forbidden for particular reasons, which, when declared, must appear satisfactory?

The law forbid us to eat *hedge-hogs, owls, birds of prey*; add to this, various kinds of *locusts, rats, lizards, serpents, &c. &c.* You are amazed at the prohibitions, sir, but your amazement would cease if you would recollect that it was usual then as well as now, (1) to feed on certain kinds of locusts in that country? but that in the time of our forefathers some savage nations did eat every kind of these without distinction; that even those animals that live on carrion, (2) lizards, field-mice, were used by them for food. That not only the Psyllas, but other Arabians did eat, and still do eat (3) serpents and vipers, and that even in some very polished parts of Europe, are the raven and the snake-dishes (4) not totally unused. What, sir, do you blame our legislator for having forbidden his people to use this vile and dangerous food, and for having pointed out to them more convenient and wholesome nourishment!

#### § 5. Of *Ixions and Griffins*.

Among the birds of prey that are forbidden, you mention *Ixions and Griffins*. Is this done in order to

(1) *To feed on certain kinds of locusts.* Locusts could scarcely serve for food in Europe, they are too small and too poor. Those of the east, being larger, can give better nourishment. In Palestine, Arabia, and the neighbouring countries, various kinds of them are now eaten. They salt and preserve them. They are served up fried, or in ragout. Dr. Shaw relates in his voyages, that he eat some of them fried in Barbary, and that they tasted much like lobsters. In 1693, shoals of them appeared in Germany, which did much hurt in many places. A certain Jew told the celebrated Ludolph that these latter were like those of Judea. This learned man ventured to eat of them with his whole family, and found the same taste in them that Shaw did.

Locusts were in ancient times an approved food, and commonly used by the Ethiopians, the Lybians, the Parthians, and the other nations of the east which surrounded the Jews. The testimonies of Diodorus Siculus, Aristotle, Pliny, &c. leave no room for doubt. John the Baptist lived on them in the wilderness. See Chais, &c. *Edit.*

(2) *Lizards, field-mice.* These animals are still used for food in Arabia; See the voyages of Hasselquist, Shaw, &c. *Aut.*

(3) *Serpents and vipers.* See the voyages of Hasselquist. *Aut.*

(4) *Not totally unused.* It is said that they are used for food in some provinces of France. *Aut.*



confound the (1) heron and the lapwing with those imaginary animals, which never existed but in the heads of poets and painters? This is indeed an happy expedient for throwing our divine law into ridicule! However we doubt of its success with learned readers. They well know the value of those pieces of raillery, which are founded merely on the obscurity of terms, and the ignorance of ancient customs.

§ 6. *Other animals forbidden.*

If our fathers were ordered not to eat fish without scales, we do not think they had any reason to regret it. It is well known, that in the east especially, this kind of fish is neither clean nor wholesome; that they always lie in heated mud, and that they are flabby, viscous, and (2) hard of digestion.

You do not approve the prohibition of the hare neither. Perhaps you are fond of it, others are not so. We must not dispute about tastes. But do you not know that some meats may be most excellent and desirable in one country, and not so in another? How can you tell whether, in hot countries the hare has that pleasing flavour which you admire? The flesh of it, which there must be more black and coarse, might not have been agreeable to the inhabitants of Palestine and their neighbours. We have the more reason to believe this, because to this day the Egyptians and Arabians do not esteem it at all, as (3) Hasselquist tells us. They leave those animals says this learned traveller, in perfect peace, which are so much harassed

(1) *The heron and the lapwing.* It is very clear that Moses does not speak here of imaginary beings, but of birds of prey well known in his time. Yet it would be hard to tell exactly what kinds of birds of prey are meant by the Hebrew words which we read in Leviticus. The same may be said of a great number of the quadrupeds and reptiles which are mentioned in this chapter. *Edit.*

(2) *Hard of digestion.* Some ancient writers assure us that the Egyptians eat no fish without scales; and Grotius observes that Numa had forbid them to be used in the repasts which were given in honour of the gods. See the notes of this learned man on Leviticus. *Edit.*

(3) *As Hasselquist tells us.* See his voyages. It has been observed also that the ancient Britons did not eat hare, *Leporem gustare fas non putant*, says Cæsar de Bello Gallico, lib. 5. This is the learned Spencer's observation in his treatise of the Ritual laws of the Hebrews. *Aut.*



in the rest of the world. The legislator therefore only prohibited a kind of food which was in no esteem. Is there any room for astonishment in this?

Perhaps too you find swine's flesh good and wholesome; but many, even among Christians, think otherwise, and look upon it as food hard of digestion. This is not all; this animal is subject to a contagious distemper which was formerly very common in Palestine, and the neighbourhood. For this very reason your ancestors, having brought the leprosy back with them in their expeditions to the Holy Land, forbade swine's flesh to be sold in the markets, except the beast had been inspected by officers (1) called *experts*, who were appointed for this purpose. Lastly, even the filthiness of this quadruped was sufficient to give a distaste for it. And agreeably to this the Egyptians, Arabians, almost all nations, from Ethiopia to India (2) abhorred it. How much more must a people have detested it, to whom the law recommends so strongly cleanliness and purity, even in externals. In short, swine's flesh is hard of digestion, it is subject to the leprosy; swine is the most filthy of animals. These three things, are, we think, causes sufficient for banishing (3) it from our tables.

(1) *Called experts.* It is said that these *experts*, whose offices still exist, were appointed under the title of *counsellors of the king, inspectors of swine's tongues*. For it is the tongues of these animals which are to be inspected. When ulcers or white blisters appear on it, they judge them to be leprous, and the people are forbid to expose them to sale. See *le Traité de la Police, par le Commissaire Lamare. Aut.*

(2) *Abhorred it.* The aversion of the Egyptians for swine went so far, as Herodotus relates, that if a man had touched, even by chance, one of those animals, he went directly and plunged into the Nile without undressing. The greatest part of those nations, Egyptians, Arabians, Indians, still preserve the same abhorrence. Mahomet did not forbid, in very strong terms, swine's flesh, and yet the Mahometans every where detest it. See Chais. *Aut.*

(3) *For banishing it from our tables.* In Arabia, &c. says Mr. de Boulainvilliers, the saltiness of water and food, causes the inhabitants to be much given to eruptions. Therefore the law which forbade eating swine's flesh was a good law for those nations. Sanctorius has observed that swine's flesh which is eaten, perspires but little, and that this food besides prevents the perspiration of other aliments. He has found the diminution to amount to one third. It is well known too that the want of perspiration creates or inflames cutaneous distempers. Therefore swine's flesh ought to be prohibited in those climates, that are subject to these distempers, such as Palestine, Ara-



§ 7. *Two other motives for the prohibition of all these animals.*

The heaviness or lightness, the danger or salubrity of certain foods, were, no doubt, sufficient motives to a wise legislator, for prohibiting or permitting them; but Moses had still more important reasons for doing it, and which had a closer connexion with the end which he proposed to himself, in the establishment of his legislation.

Most nations, at that time, used or abstained from certain aliments, rather from religious prejudices and vain superstition, than from barbarism and rudeness of manners. Thus the Syrians, or at least their priests, (1) never eat fish. The Egyptians neither fish nor birds of prey, nor any of those quadrupeds which divided not the hoof, and the Phenicians neither (2) pigeons nor doves. The ancient Zabians, abstained likewise from various animals, because they thought them particularly consecrated to the several heavenly bodies which they worshipped, and because they made use of them in their (3) divinations. Moses meant to prevent these abuses when he established the distinction of food upon different principles.

The second motive for these prohibitions was to distinguish and to separate by them the Hebrews from all other nations, to imprint continually on their minds, by this distinction, their particular consecration unto the Lord, and, forgive us this piece of vanity, for it is well founded, their superiority, at least in point of worship, over all other nations of that

bia, Egypt, and Lybia, &c. This is the observation of Mr. de Montesquieu, Spirit of Laws, Vol. 2. *Aut.*

Mr. de Voltaire says himself, that Palestine is a leprous country, in which swine's flesh is almost poison. Can he think it extraordinary, that we should be forbidden to use it? Dict. Philos. Article, Montefq. *Edit.*

(1) *Never eat fish.* Some of those nations worshipped their Gods under this form. *Aut.*

(2) *Nor Doves.* They thought their goddess had appeared under the form of a dove. *Aut.*

(3) *Divinations.* With a view to those superstitions of Pagans, in distinguishing meats, one of the Christian apostles calls this distinction, *a doctrine of devils.* *Edit.*



time. This motive is certain, being clearly expressed in the law: (1) *And ye shall be holy unto me, for I the Lord, am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean. And ye shall be holy men unto me, neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field. Ye shall cast it to the dogs.* As if he had said to them, according to the observation of a (2) learned commentator, “You are a chosen people, wholly consecrated to my glory, use no food but what is suitable to your dignity. Know yourselves, and make all nations know by the purity and innocence of your food, that you belong to an holy and pure God.”

We think, sir, that there is nothing in these motives that can degrade our nation, or derogate from the divine prudence of its legislator.

§ 8. *Of some other ritual laws, and the motives of them.*

Even, if after so many ages, the motives of all our ritual laws were unknown, yet the admirable wisdom of our legislator, exemplified in so many instances, would give us good grounds to suppose that he had very strong reasons for appointing them, reasons worthy of himself, and of the spirit of God which directed him.

But we are not reduced to this, with respect to the greatest part of our laws. Many learned Jews and Christians have shewn the end and use of them, with regard to the times and places in which our fathers lived. Some of them were condescensions which the Lord deigned to shew towards a people, who had been long habituated to the customs of Egypt. Hence the majestick apparatus of the tabernacle, that multitude of sacrifices, those pompous

(1) *And ye shall be holy.* See Leviticus ch. 20. and Exodus 22.

(2) *A learned commentator.* Mr. Chais. This learned clergyman has comprized in his comment, the best things the English writers have said on the Pentateuch. We have made great use of his comment in this letter. *Aut.*



ceremonies to which the patriarchs were strangers, and which formed part of our worship. Others were intended to give the Hebrews an insurmountable aversion, for the barbarous rites, and abominable superstitions of their neighbours. Hence those prohibitions, against making their children (1) pass through the fire, against (2) stigmatizing themselves, (3) against flashing their bodies with knives, or cutting their hair (4) in a certain form, against (5) eating near blood, against worshipping in the high places, or (6) planting groves near the tabernacle, &c.

These laws were intended to fix lasting traces on their minds, of the wonders which God had worked for them, to perpetuate from generation to generation, the memory of these great events, and to evidence the truth of them to the whole earth, even down to our times. And this was the chief motive

(1) *Pass through the fire.* This was the practice of the worshippers of Moloch. They passed thro' the fire also, in honour of Apollo. Apollo, says Aruns, in the Eneid,

*Quem primi colimus, cui pineus ardor acervo  
Pascitur & medium, freti pietate, per Ignem  
Cultores multâ premimus vestigia prunâ. Edit.*

(2) *Not to stigmatize themselves.* It was the custom of certain idolaters to imprint on their skin various figures and characters in honour of their gods. *Aut.*

(3) *Not to flash their bodies with knives.* The priests of Cybele used to mutilate themselves; those of Baal, Bellona, Isis, &c. cut themselves with knives. At funerals, whether to appease the infernal gods, or to do honour to the dead, by expressing strong grief, the women especially, tore themselves and cut the skin of their arms and breasts. These mad expressions of grief were forbidden at Athens and Rome by express laws. *Mulieres genas ne radunto,* says the law of the twelve tables. *Edit.*

(4) *In a certain form.* i. e. in a round form, this was another superstitious custom of some nations near Palestine. *Aut.*

(5) *Near blood.* Maimonides tells us that the ancient Zabians, eat the flesh of victims near those pits, where they received their blood, in order to employ it in some magical operations. See his treatise called *More Nevochim* *Aut.*

(6) *Or to plant groves, &c.* The pagan temples were commonly situated on high places, and surrounded with groves, which occasioned many superstitions and irregularities, which the legislator meant to prevent by these prohibitions. For this reason many of our pious kings are censured in the scripture, for not having destroyed *the high places and the groves.* Although these high places were consecrated to the Lord, yet the Israelites often gave themselves up in them to the superstitions and irregularities which attended idolatrous worship. *Edit.*



for instituting the redemption of the first born, the offering of the first fruits, and of most of our festivals, &c. &c. Those laws, like so many emblems and useful parables, contained, at the bottom, admirable instruction. Thus the necessity of so many precautions against legal pollutions, so many washings and outward purifications, intimated to them the still more binding obligation of purity of heart.

Other laws flowed from the (1) legislator's wise policy, who wanted to attach the Hebrews to the land which God had given them. To make them love its products, and to extirpate for ever from their hearts any wish to return into Egypt. Hence those laws which prescribed the use of oil in their sacrifices, which Egypt does not produce, and of wine, which the (2) Egyptians abhorred; hence the prohibition to eat the lamb or the kid boiled in milk, as those nations did that (3) had not oil.

There are some laws besides, which seem to have been specially intended to serve for standing palpable proofs of the continual providence of God over his people, and of the divine mission of the legislator. Such, among others, was the law, enacting that the lands should rest during the sabbatical year; a remarkable and singular law, and which could scarcely come into the legislator's mind by natural means. It must have been founded on the certainty he had, that every sixth year would produce abundantly enough for the three following. Without this Moses would have run a risk of losing all his people by

### X

(1) *The legislator's wise policy.* The design of Moses was to keep the Israelites shut up between Libanus, the Euphrates and Egypt. This left them a country of reasonable extent, where it would have been difficult to go and attack them. A wise policy and full of moderation. *Edit.*

(2) *The Egyptians abhorred.* See in the Memoirs of the Academy of Göttingen, a curious dissertation by Mr. de Michaelis, called, *de legibus Palestinam populo Israelitico caram facturis.* *Aut.*

(3) *Had not oil.* Dr. Pocock has discovered again the custom of eating the lamb and the kid boiled in water and sour milk, among the Arabians, which Moses forbids in this law. We must observe that the law was conceived in these terms. Thou shalt not eat the kid, or the lamb, in the milk of his mother. This was at once a stroke of policy, and a lesson of humanity. *Aut.*



famine, and of drawing upon his memory publick curses. Now from whom could this assurance come, but from God? Can we conceive that Moses would have ventured to enact such a law, if he had been only a common legislator? But what would have been the height of madness in a politician, confined to worldly views, is an evidence that his commission was from heaven, and that the God, whose servant he called himself, continually (1) watched over Israel.

Our ritual laws then, which you look upon as whimsical, did not spring from caprice. They were (2) positive laws, but yet founded in reason, and had each a particular motive, altho' the distance of so many ages prevents us from knowing them all.

§ 9. *General motive of all the Ritual Laws.*

But to these particular motives a general one must be added, which alone would be sufficient to justify the wisdom of these extraordinary institutions. They all tended to one common end, worthy of a great legislator. This end of his was, to ensure the duration of his people, and the purity of their worship against all the revolutions of time.

For this purpose, it was necessary to attach the Hebrews very strongly to their religion; and this he did most effectually by the multitude of observances which he laid on them. For, as the author of the Spirit of Laws judiciously says, “a religion which is  
“loaded with many rites, attaches men more strongly  
“than one that has fewer. The things which we  
“are continually doing, become very dear to us.  
“Hence, he observes, *the tenacious obstinacy of the  
“Jews.*” This is a consideration truly philosophical, which Moses had before him, and we are much surprized that a man of your sagacity did not catch it.

In order to attain more certainly to this end, it was necessary besides, to keep all the individuals of the

(1) *Watched over Israel.* This is an observation of Leland against Tindal's *Aut.*

(2) See above, § 1. *Aut.*



nation closely united together, and separate from every other. Now what could more effectually do this, than those extraordinary observances and various rites, which differed from those of other nations, or were diametrically opposite to their customs? Even in the opinion of heathens this was a mark of distinction between them and us, and a barrier which (1) divided us from them at all times.

Yes, sir, if the perseverance of the Jewish nation in the same worship, if their existence after so many revolutions and catastrophes, can be accounted for by human reason, to these institutions they are due. By the observance of these rites the Hebrews have formed, do form, and will form, until the accomplishment of the prophecies, a nation apart, and by this, in spite of their captivities, dispersions, and miseries, they triumph over time, whilst the most powerful and wisest nations have disappeared off the face of the earth.

Such is the end and general utility of those rites which you condemn so rashly. Are these ridiculous views, absurd policy and weak projects? The Jewish legislator was better acquainted with the heart of man than you sir, and with the necessity which all religious and civil societies are in of external bonds of union. To speak of him merely as a man, and to judge of you by your criticisms, although we should allow you to be a great philosopher, and a person of fine taste, you would have been in his place a weak politician, and a very poor legislator. Your nation, your

(1) *Divided us from them at all times.* Ancient legislators, especially the Egyptians, looked upon the too free communication of their people with strangers, as one of the principal causes of the corruption of their morals, and of their disregard of the customs and laws of their own country. Particular rites, abstinence from certain meats, &c. might prevent this communication. *I like not to live with your Egyptians,* says a soldier in a Greek comick writer, *I love pork, and these people eat none.* Perhaps Moses borrowed this piece of policy from them, of which he made a better use than they did, and which he turned to better advantage. It succeeded with him. *The separation from strangers,* says the author of the Spirit of Laws, *is the preservation of morals.* It seems as if this illustrious writer had reflected much more on legislation, than Mr. Voltaire. *Edit.*



religion, and your laws, would long ago have (1) come to an end.

(1) *Come to an end.* We think that the authors of these letters have proved satisfactorily the wisdom of the ritual laws of Moses, but the immutability, or, as the Rabbies say, the eternity of these laws, is not a necessary consequence from the wisdom of them.

1st, Our authors confess that it is not exactly known what animals were forbidden by some of these laws. Here then are some ritual laws, which must necessarily be unobserved, thro' the ignorance of terms. 2dly, Even the wisdom of many of these laws, was evidently relative to the circumstances of times, places, morals of neighbouring nations, &c. Now the times are no longer the same, manners have changed; and since Adrian and Pſmānazar, the scattered Jews have inhabited other climates. 3dly, The chief end of the greatest part of these laws was to preserve the Israelites from idolatry. Can these be looked on as necessary where there is no idolatry? And will they be so on that day when all nations shall be united in the one faith, and in the worship of the one true God. 4thly, Their prophets have foretold this union, they have foretold that a purer worship was to be substituted in place of their ceremonies.

We invite those Jews who believe in the immutability and eternity of all their laws, to reflect on what we have now said. *Christ.*



## L E T T E R III.

*Of toleration among the Jews. Examination of the first question which the learned critick proposes to himself, in these two chapters, whether intolerance was of divine right in the Jewish religion? That the Jewish religion was intolerant. That it was not the only intolerant one. And that it was more wisely so, than the laws of ancient nations.*

**I**T is now time, sir, to go to that which is, or ought to be the principal object of your two chapters. You propose, you say, to discuss two questions. 1st. Whether intolerance was of divine right in the Jewish religion? 2dly Whether it was always practised in it? We shall follow the same order here, and examine in turn what you say on each of these questions.

Let us begin by the first, and consider not only whether the Jewish law was intolerant, but also, why it was so. Whether it was the only intolerant law, and in what respect it was so. These objects, which seem interesting to us, shall be the sole business of this letter. May it be the occasion of giving you some moments of pleasure!

§ 1. *That the Jewish law was intolerant with respect to worship.*

By your manner of beginning, sir, we thought that you would have endeavoured to authorize toleration, by some text of the Jewish code, explained in your usual way. But not at all. You freely confess that severe laws are found in this code relative to worship, and still more severe punishments. Nothing is more certain.

There we are commanded, not only to worship none others except God, but it is besides expressly ordered, that *whosoever sacrifices to any other gods, than the Almighty, shall be put to death without remis-*



*sion*, Exodus, *passim*, to which Deuteronomy adds, *If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, entice thee secretly, saying, let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, thou shalt not consent unto him nor hearken unto him, neither shall thine eye pity him. But thou shalt surely kill him. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die, because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God.* Deuteronomy, ch. 13.

With such rigour the law treats those, who shall entice their brethen from the true worship, pretended prophets, friends, relations, *they must be informed against, stoned, and die, because they have spoke of rebellion against Jehovah.* “And if it be found that “any of the cities of Israel, by the solicitation of “its inhabitants, has left the Lord, to serve other “Gods, the law orders that a judicial inquiry shall “be made on it, and that if the crime be proved, “and the people found to be hardened in their apostacy,” then *they shall surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly.* Deuteronomy, ch. 12.

Examples of the utmost severity confirm these statutes. The worshippers of the golden calf are slaughtered without mercy. The worship of the God of Madian is punished by death. And as soon as the tribes beyond Jordan are suspected of raising altars to strange gods, all Israel is in arms to destroy them. See the books of Exodus and Numbers.

Therefore it is certain that the divine law of the Jews was intolerant, and severe, with regard to worship. It was so necessarily, and could not be otherwise. Why? This is what you seem not to have well understood, or, not to have been willing to instruct your readers in. We shall endeavour to clear it up.

§ 2. *Why the Jewish law was so severe and intolerant with regard to worship.*



The intolerance and severity of our laws on worship, astonish and offend you. You imagine, no doubt, sir, that the worship of strange gods was among the Hebrews a venial fault. This is a mistake, sir, it was not only a weighty offence against conscience, a violent breach of one of the first laws of nature, but it was also a crime against the state, and the most worthy of punishment of any such crimes.

Break out, at last, of the narrow circle of objects which surround you, and judge not always of our government by those which you now see. The Hebrew commonwealth, was neither a plain religious institution, nor an administration purely civil, but partook of both at once. And as in your forms of government, the church and state are distinct, so, on the contrary, in ours, they formed but one thing. Every strange worship, as it attacked religion in its fundamental principle, so it wounded at the same time the state, and that too in its most important, tender, and essential part. The grand object of the Hebrew government was to preserve the nation from idolatry, and from the crimes that flow from it, and to perpetuate amongst us the knowledge and worship of the true God. Upon this worship stood the whole fabrick. This was the centre to which every thing tended, and the powerful bond, which united all the members of the commonwealth. And it was also, in the opinion of sound philosophy, the great title of pre-eminence and superiority which the Hebrews claimed over all the people of the earth. The Almighty, by the original contract passed between him and his people, had annexed to their perseverance in this worship, the possession of that land which he had given them, the security of individuals, and the (1) prosperity of the empire. Therefore, he who

(1) *Prosperity of the empire.* See with respect to all these points, Exodus, ch. 19, and Deuteronomy, 5. 7, &c. *Act.*



adopted, or advised foreign worship, disturbed public tranquillity, sowed the baneful (1) seeds of division, and committed an act of high treason against the state, by robbing it of its glory, and of all its hopes of happiness and duration. Was this a venial fault?

In this government, Jehovah was not only the object of religious worship as the only true God, he was besides the first civil magistrate, and head of the body politic. He had chosen the Hebrews for his subjects as well as his worshippers, and the Hebrews had acknowledged him for their king as well as their God. The worship of Jehovah only, and an inviolable attachment to it, were the first condition and basis of his alliance with his people. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* To worship strange gods was therefore a breach of this alliance, a rebellion against the sovereign, in a word, the highest act of treason. In what wise government can high treason be tolerated by law?

Let us then no longer be surprized at the intolerance and severity of our laws respecting worship. They treated, and ought to treat, the worshippers of strange gods, as the laws of all nations then did (2) traitors and rebellious subjects. Besides, it was incumbent on our government to be the more severe, as our Hebrews had head, hearts and intractable minds, a strong bias to idolatry, and powerful in-

(1) *Seeds of division.* See above letter, IIIId. *Aut.*

(2) *Traitors, &c.* In those ancient times, when rough manners called for severe laws, high treason was punished with the utmost rigour. The crime of one person generally brought total ruin on his family. Guilty cities were entirely destroyed, and the inhabitants slaughtered without distinction. History supplies us with many instances of this severity, not only in the east, but among the Greeks and Romans, even in the latter times of the commonwealth.

The laws of modern nations are very rigorous too against high treason, rebellion, conspiracy against the state, &c. &c. They oblige men to discover even their friends and relations, and punish with the utmost severity those who refuse to do it. *Salus Populi, suprema Lex.* Edit.



citements from the example of every other people.

§ 3. *Whether intolerance, with regard to worship, was peculiar to the Jewish law.*

But intolerance, altho' more essential to the Jewish government than to any other, yet was not peculiar to it. No, sir, say what you will, this was a principle of legislation, a political maxim adopted by the most renowned nations of antiquity. In fact, when we see the Persians, who admitted no statues in their temples, breaking those of the gods of Egypt, and of Greece; and the different Egyptian cantons, sometimes in arms against their vanquishers, sometimes (1) against one another, to defend or avenge their gods, we must look upon them as nations no way indifferent with respect to worship.

Whatever may be said of those nations, whose history and laws are less known to us, it cannot be denied that the laws of the Greeks and Romans were absolutely intolerant with regard to worship.

The decree of Diopythes commanding that they should be impeached who denied the existence of the gods, the prosecutions commenced against Protagoras, the reward offered for the head of Diagoras, the dangers of Alcibiades, the flight of Aristotle, the ba-

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(1) *Against one another.* Juvenal gives an instance of this, Sat. 15th. where he describes the bloody contest of the Ombes and Tentyrites on this account. Their rage was raised to such a pitch, that the victors tore and devoured the panting limbs of the vanquished.

————— *Summus, utrinque*  
*Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum*  
*Odit uterque locus; quum solos credat habendos*  
*Esse deos, quos ipse colit.*

" This passage, which is not the only one of this kind in ancient history, clearly proves, says the translator of Bentley's remarks on the discourse on free-thinking, that religion has caused violent animosities and cruel wars among other sects besides Christians."

The new translator of Juvenal makes the same observation. This passage he says, will serve to shew that religious intolerance is more ancient than some great writers have thought it. Must Mr. Voltaire be of this number? This renowned author pretends that religious wars were known only amongst Christians. He has said it, and repeated it, *legentis ad fastidium*. What pleasure can he take in continually repeating to his readers falsehoods which have been so often repeated and so often confuted. *Edit.*



nishment of Stilpo, Anaxagoras with difficulty escaping death, Aspasia owing her life to the tears and the eloquence of Pericles, all the philosophers prosecuted for having written or spoken against the gods of the country, a priestess executed for having introduced strange gods, Socrates condemned to drink hemlock, because he was accused of not acknowledging the gods of the state, &c. These are facts which attest too strongly the intolerance and severity of the laws on worship, even in the most humane and polished nation of Greece, to leave (1) any doubt of the matter.

The Roman laws were no less clear and severe in this respect. We need only read the texts, which you yourself quote to be convinced of it. Strange gods shall not be worshipped. *Deos peregrinos ne colunto.* Does a tolerating government express itself thus?

But this is not all. Follow the history of this great people, and you will find the same prohibitions given by the senate in the year of Rome, (2) 325, and the ediles charged to see to the execution of them; these prohibitions renewed in the year (3) 529; the ediles severely rebuked for having neglected these orders, and superior magistrates appointed to have the laws better executed. You will there find the worship of Serapis and Isis, which had secretly crept into the capital, forbidden, and the chapels of

(1) *Any doubt.* These facts are related by Cicero, Diogenes, Laertius, Athenagoras, Clemens Alexandrinus, &c. They are quoted by Josephus to the sophist Apollonius, who then upbraided the Jews, as Mr. Voltaire does now, with their intolerance with respect to worship. If this learned critick had read Josephus, he probably would not have brought on this reproach again, or he would have taken the trouble of proving the falsehood of those facts, which the Jewish historian opposes to his antagonist. But in all probability the illustrious author did not draw out of so ancient a spring. He has more modern authors for vouchers, Woolston, Collins, Tindall, &c. *Edit.*

(2) *In the year of Rome 325.* See Livy B. 9. No. 30. *Nec corpora modo, says he, affecta tunc. Sed animos quoque multiplex religio & pluraque externa invasit; donec publicus jam pudor ad primores civitatis parvenit. Datum inde negotium Ædilibus ut animadverterent, ne qui, nisi Romani Dii, neque alio more, quam patri colerentur. Aut.*

(3) *In the year 529.* See Livy lib. 25, No. 5. *Inculcati graviter ab Senatu Ædiles Triumvirique capitales, quod non prohiberent. Ubi potentius jam esse id malum apparuit quam ut minores per magistratus sedaretur, Marco Attilio prætori urbis negotium ab Senatu datum est. Idem.*



these new divinities demolished by the consuls in the year (1) 536, many decrees of Pontiffs, and Senatus consultums, without number, against new worship, quoted to the senate in (2) 566, and a strange worship proscribed in (3) 623.

This intolerance was continued under the emperors; witness the (4) counsels of Mæcenas to Augustus against those who should introduce, or honour in Rome, other gods than those of the empire. Witness the Egyptian superstitions, proscribed under (5) this emperor, and under Tiberius; the Jews banished if they would not (6) renounce their religion. But witness above, all the christians driven into exile, stripped of their property, and given up for so long a time, and in such great numbers, to the most cruel torment, not for their crimes but (7) their religion, under Nero, Domitian, Maximian, Diocletian, &c. &c. even under Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, &c.

(1) *In the year 536.* See Valerius maximus, lib. 4. *Aut.*

(2) *Anno 566.* See Livy, lib. 39. No. 16. After having quoted those decrees of Pontiffs, and Senatus consultums without number, *innumerabilia decreta pontificum, Senatus consulta*, the historian adds, *quoties patrum avorumque ætate negotium hoc magistratibus datum, ut sacra externa fieri vetarent omnemque disciplinam sacrificandi præterquam more Romano abolerent?* *Edit.*

(3) *In 623.* The worship of Jupiter Sabazius. With regard to this worship, the wise Rollin observes. That in every period instances may be seen of the attention of the Romans to keep off new sorts of superstition. And Mr. Voltaire asserts in twenty places, coolly and without exception, *that the Romans tolerated and permitted all kinds of worship!* *Aut.*

(4) *The counsels of Mæcenas to Augustus.* See Dion Cassius, lib. 42. We think it proper to lay before the reader, in full, this passage of the historian. We shall translate it literally from the Greek text, "Honour the gods with care, says Mæcenas to Augustus, according to the customs of your fathers, and compel others to honour them. Hate those who innovate in religion, and punish them, not only because of the gods, he that despises them has no respect for any thing, but because they who introduce new gods, prevail on many persons to follow strange laws, and that from thence arise afflictions by oath, cabals, parties, all things dangerous in a monarchy. Suffer no Atheists nor Magicians." We invite Mr. Voltaire to consult the original, and to judge whether this translation is exact, at least in the essential parts. *Edit.*

(5) *Under this Emperor.* Agrippa proscribed them. See Dion Cassius, lib. 54. The consuls Gabinius and Piso had already, some years before, thrown down the altars raised in the capitol to the gods of Egypt. *Aut.*

(6) *Renounce their Religion.* Tacitus informs us of this. *Cederent Italiâ nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exuissent.* See Annals, lib. 2. No. 85. *Aut.*

(7) *But their religion.* See Pliny's famous letter to Trajan, quoted below by one of our Portuguese brethren, and the picture of the primitive Christians drawn by this Jew. Compare this picture with those which some celebrated Christian writers have drawn. *Aut.*



But what do I say? Even the laws which the philosophers of Athens and Rome, wrote for imaginary republics, were intolerant. Plato does not give his citizens liberty of worship, and Cicero expressly forbids them to have any other gods than those of the state. "Let no body have gods apart, says he, let  
 "no new or strange gods be worshipped, even in  
 "private, except they have received the publick  
 "sanction." *Separatim nemo habebit deos neve novos, sed nec advenas, nisi publice adscitos colunto.*

Further, sir, recollect (1) what you have so often said of the secret of mysteries, the great principle of which was, according to you, the unity of God, creator and governor of the world. And also, what you have said of the double doctrine of the philosophers, the one external and publick, the other internal, and which they communicated to none but their dearest disciples, on those matters which might affect the established worship. It was necessary according to  
 "you, to conceal the principle of the unity of God  
 "from men who were attached to polytheism. The  
 "highest discretion was needful, in order not to of-  
 "fend the prejudices of the multitude. It would  
 "have been too dangerous an attempt to undeceive  
 "them at once. The enraged multitude would in-  
 "stantly have called out for the condemnation of a  
 "ny one who would have dared to do it." This necessity of concealing a principle contrary to the established worship, this great danger, those well grounded fears, lest the enraged multitude should call out for the condemnation of any one who would have dared to instruct them, prove evidently the intolerance of the laws, in whatever place so much secrecy and caution were required.

(1) *What you have said so often.* See particularly on all this *Philosophy of History*, art. MYSTERIES, &c. *Aut.*



We think, sir, that whoever recollects all those passages of ancient history, must be surprized to hear you asserting without exception, “that among ancient nations, none even constrained the liberty of thinking. That among the Greeks, Socrates alone was persecuted for his opinions. That the Romans permitted every kind of worship, and that they looked upon toleration as the most sacred law (1) of the *Jus Gentium*.”

Our astonishment increases when we hear you asserting, “that the Romans, more wise than the Greeks, never persecuted any philosopher (2) for his opinions;” for you say, in another place, *there is not one example among the Romans from Romulus to Domitian, of any person having been persecuted (3) for his way of thinking.* Domitian then, at least, persecuted *for the way of thinking.* And whom? Christians or philosophers? Now you have often denied, that the Romans ever persecuted the Christians *for the way of thinking.* He must then have persecuted the philosophers.

Now, if the philosophers were not persecuted under Domitian, *for their way of thinking,* (4) for what reason were they persecuted? Why do we see them banished from Rome by this emperor, as they had been before by Nero? And yet if they had been banished only by these two tyrants, the declared enemies of every thing that was good, this would rather have redounded to the honour of philosophy. But they were persecuted under the mild and gentle government of Vespasian. “They were the only people, says (5) a modern writer, who compelled him to use a severity towards them, which was contra-

(1) *Of the Jus Gentium.* See Treatise of Toleration, Art. Whether the Romans were intolerant. *Aut.*

(2) *For his opinions.* See letter on Vanini, in the *Nouveaux Melanges.* *Aut.*

(3) *For his way of thinking.* See Philosophy of History.

(4) *For what reason were they persecuted.* Was it as an eloquent magistrate says, because this bold philosophy formed cabals, and that its members strove to excite seditions among the people under pretence of instructing them. *Aut.*

(5) *A modern writer.* See the Roman History by Crevier, a learned man of worth, altho’ abused by M. Voltaire. *Aut.*



“ry to his natural temper. The presumptuous max-  
 “ims of the stoicks, inspired men with a love of li-  
 “berty, which bordered upon rebellion, and these  
 “teachers of sedition, gave publick lectures of inde-  
 “pendence. At length, by thus sapping an autho-  
 “rity which they should have revered, and held dear,  
 “they wearied out the goodness of the prince, and  
 “their declamations never ceased ’till some of them  
 “were banished, others confined in islands, and some  
 “of them even whipped and put to death.”

But further, the emperors, in banishing the philo-  
 sophers, *only conformed*, says Suetonius, *to ancient*  
*laws which had been made against them.* He is right;  
 for so early as the year 160 before Christ, they had  
 been banished from Rome (1) by a decree of the se-  
 nate; and the pretor, M. Pomponius, was ordered  
 to see that not one of them should remain in the city.  
 Why? Because, say historians, they were looked on  
 as dangerous talkers, who, whilst they reasoned on  
 virtue, sapped its foundations, and were capable, by  
 their vain sophisms, of corrupting the simplicity of  
 ancient morals, and of spreading among young people,  
 opinions dangerous to their country. On these princi-  
 ples and for these reasons, Cato the elder suddenly  
 dismissed three ambassadors who were philosophers.  
*The wise Romans* then did not think that *philosophers*  
*can never do any hurt.* Why were you not there,  
 sir, to inform them of this?

We do not mean by these reflections, to sharpen  
 men’s minds against philosophy. We know that it  
 may be useful to individuals and to states. Nor to  
 vindicate the intolerant spirit of ancient nations.  
 We think it has been very worthy of censure in many  
 times and cases, and we condemn it as much, or per-

(1) *By a decree of the senate.* Suetonius informs us of this in his book of the  
*famous rhetoricians*, where he gives the words of the decree. *Quod verba facta*  
*sunt de philosophis de eâ re censuerunt patres conscripti ut M. Pomponius Prætor*  
*animadverteret curaretque uti ne Romæ essent.* As every thing may be abused,  
 philosophy as well as religion, it is the part of a wise government to set  
 bounds to philosophical, as well as religious, fanaticism. Both are dange-  
 rous. *Edit.*



haps more than you do. We only want to convince you, that freedom of thought was not near so absolute among those nations as you say, and that your assertions, on their toleration, in order to be true, should have been accompanied with many restrictions, which you have not put in. That if a free toleration of all opinions, philosophical and religious, is the criterion of a wise government, the Romans have not been wiser than the Greeks, for both of them were intolerant, with regard to worship. They were so even with respect to the philosophers. In short (1) they persecuted, and in order to this they needed only to follow the natural bent of their laws.

§ 4. *In what respect the Jewish law was intolerant. Comparison of this intolerance with that of other nations.*

It is a fact then, sir, that the Jewish was not the only intolerant law. It remains to shew in what respects it was intolerant.

1st, It was intolerant in favour of truth. That of other nations in favour of error. By the intolerance of their laws, these latter nations strove to uphold absurd doctrines, forms of worship which dishonoured humanity, and made virtue blush. The object of our intolerance, was to preserve the only true faith, and the only rational worship.

2dly, This intolerance had certain bounds, which other states were strangers to. It forbade the Hebrews to suffer strange gods, or their obstinate worshippers. But where? *In those cities which the Lord had given us.* It did not then extend beyond our country. And let certain writers say what they will to cast an odium on us, our fathers never thought that they were commissioned by their law, to go and

(1) *They persecuted.* Some of the Greek kings of Syria and Egypt, persecuted the Jews cruelly to make them renounce their religion and their laws. In the year 215 before Christ, Ptolemy Philopator, had formed the design of putting to death all the Jews who should refuse to adopt the religion and customs of the Greeks. The cruelties practised against our nation, with the same view, by Antiochus are very well known. *Edit.*



exterminate idolatry with fire and sword (1) all over the earth. Such a pretended commission, was the crime of that imposture who seduced and laid waste the eastern world.

3dly, So far was this intolerance, from making our fathers hate other nations, that they had alliances and treaties with them. They did still more. They prayed for foreign kings, their benefactors, or masters, and offered sacrifices for their prosperity, without considering what religion they professed.

To acknowledge one God, sovereign Lord of this world, to worship him only, and to respect our legislator and his laws, the law required no more than this from the stranger. This gave him the privilege of living amongst us, and even of having access to our temples, and of bearing (2) some part in our solemnities.

As to the citizen, intolerance was confined to certain points, few in number, which were not *metaphysical distinctions*, but capital and pernicious errors, or outward acts, and palpable deeds, atheism, idolatry, blasphemy, an insolent contempt of religion and its laws, &c. *It therefore did not oblige men to murder one another for paragraphs, to bury men in dungeons, to hang, break on the wheel, burn, slaughter our fellow creatures for sophisms and unintelligible disputes, for distinctions, theological lemmas, and antilemmas, and such excesses as these, which Christians have laid to the charge of (3) christianity!*

(1) *All over the earth.* It shall be shewn hereafter that this imputation is demonstrably false by the whole body of our laws. *Aut.*

(2) *Some part in our solemnities.* The proselytes of the gate, who worshipped the God of Israel, but who were not circumcised, and had not embraced our law like the proselytes of righteousness, had liberty to come into the first court of the temple and there offer their burnt-offerings. They were called *the holy men among the Gentiles*, they had liberty also to live amongst us, and to enjoy divers privileges. *Edit.*

(3) *Of Christianity.* These Christians either offend against truth, or are ill acquainted with their religion. We, Jews, can assure them that the Christian religion does not oblige men to *murder one another for paragraphs*; no, nor for the most important doctrines. The true spirit of this religion breaths nothing but mildness. He calumniates it who ascribes to it the mad deeds of blind fanaticism, and the crimes of dark policy. It equally condemns both these. These Christians confound christianity with the abuses made of it. When will those great men deign to reason justly? *Aut.*



To conclude, fir, the Jewish law was intolerant ; it was so by necessity ; it was not the only intolerant law, and this intolerance was conducted with more judgment, than in the government of ancient nations. These considerations are sufficient to remove the offence, which this intolerance has given you. How could it cause so much ill humour in a philosopher, who professes belief in one God, and who lays it down as a maxim, that *when religion becomes the law of the land, we must submit to this law* ? If this submission is of necessity, it must be so, especially when the law is fundamental, the doctrines true, and the worship pure.

We are, &c. &c.



## LETTER IV.

*Whether intolerance was always practised in the Jewish state. Of toleration under Moses. Extraordinary assertions of the learned critick. Mistakes into which he falls.*

AS it is certain that the laws of ancient nations, and particularly those of Greece and Rome, were intolerant with regard to worship, so it is undoubted, that they were not always rigorously executed. The greatest part of those nations professed polytheism, which, by its nature, excluded no kind of gods or worship. And it was a principle of policy, especially among the Romans, to adopt the gods of allied or conquered nations.

Even when a publick sanction was refused, these kinds of worship were winked at. The attention of magistrates was seldom roused in this respect, except when some disturbance, real or imaginary prejudices well or ill founded, accusations true or false, seemed to require the suppression of those new religions, and the vigorous execution of those laws, which always subsisted against foreign religions. That is to say, what is still done in many states, was then done. Some sects enjoy the privileges of the established religion, by adoption, and others are tolerated as long as they give no offence to government. This policy is perhaps necessary in great empires, in commercial republics, and among conquering nations. It is at least a mild and gentle policy, which the Jews, who have been always rather persecuted than persecutors, cannot reasonably (1) condemn.

Intolerance then, was not always practised among ancient nations. Was it always practised among the Jews? This is your second question, which you determine in the negative. "Altho' the Jewish laws

(1) *Condemn.* Much less can the Jews of Holland, such as our authors. *Edit.*



“ were severe, you say, with regard to worship, yet,  
 “ by an happy contradiction, their execution was  
 “ gentle. Some rays of universal toleration, always  
 “ break out of that cloud, of long and dreadful bar-  
 “ barism. We see instances of it under Moses, the  
 “ Judges, and in the writings of the prophets, the  
 “ variety of opinions, the diversity of sects, supply  
 “ us with clear proofs of it.”

We do not pretend to say, sir, that our laws re-  
 garding worship, were always exactly observed. We  
 know the contrary, and we acknowledge it. But we  
 think that when you endeavoured to prove a tolera-  
 tion, by the example of our fathers, in these different  
 periods, you fall into mistakes almost in every arti-  
 cle, which you may thank us for pointing out to you.  
 We shall begin by what you say of toleration under  
 Moses. Your assertions are quite new. You yourself  
 shall judge whether they are true.

§ 1. *Whether the Hebrews under the government of  
 Moses, had full liberty with regard to worship?*

If we believe you, sir, this legislator, who has been  
 described as cruel, and so often upbraided for *barba-  
 rous severity*, carried toleration to such a height, that he  
 left his people at full liberty with regard to worship.

But how can we reconcile this liberty, with the  
 accounts of the Pentateuch? How can we reconcile  
 it, especially with that severe punishment, which the  
 worship of the golden calf brought down on the re-  
 bellious Hebrews?

You say, “ that this very massacre opened the eyes  
 “ of Moses, and made him see that nothing was to be  
 “ got by severity.” He was not well convinced of it  
 then, since we find him some years after, treating the  
 worshippers of Beelphegor with the same rigour.  
 These two facts which happened, the one, when the  
 Israelites went into the wilderness, the other, at their  
 going out of it, do not square well with an *entire li-  
 berty respecting worship*.

You perceived this, and for that reason, you  
 struggled hard to invalidate the truth of those facts.



We have seen (1) above, what success you have had in the attempt, and how strong your objections were.

§ 2. *Whether the Hebrews acknowledged none but strange gods in the wilderness, and whether they did not worship Adonai until they had left it? Passages of Amos and Jeremiah. That these do not contradict Moses.*

As one error leads to another, you are not satisfied with the foregoing assertion; you add others to it still more extraordinary.

“Many commentators, you say, find it hard to reconcile the accounts given by Moses, with some passages of Amos and Jeremiah, and with the noted discourse of St. Stephen, related in the Acts.”

And you tell us also, what gives this trouble to you and the commentators. Because Amos says, that *the Jews always worshipped in the wilderness, Moloch, Rempham and Kium*, and that Jeremiah expressly says, *that God required no sacrifices from their fathers when they went out of Egypt.*

It would indeed be hard to reconcile Amos with Moses, if Amos had said, that the Jews in the wilderness *always* worshipped those strange gods. But this *always* is yours and not the prophets. And this additional word in a phrase, alters somewhat the sense of it.

We did not at first understand the meaning of this addition, but you explain yourself more fully with regard to it, in your philosophy of history, where returning upon these passages, you declare, that Jeremiah, Amos, and St. Stephen, affirm, “that the Jews acknowledged no other gods in the wilderness, but Moloch, Rempham, and Kium, that they offered no sacrifices to the lord (2) Adonai, whom they since worshipped.” But in good earnest, sir, how could you pretend to confirm these assertions, by the words of Amos and Jeremiah?

(1) *Above.* Letters 5th and 8th. Part 2d. *Aut.*

(2) *Adonai.* To the lord Adonai. This is an ingenious expression. It is as if one said *to the Lord, Lord.* There is not so much wit in the Hebrew. *Aut.*



Here follows the passage of Amos, *I hate, I despise your feast-days, saith the Lord, I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Tho' ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Have ye offered unto me, sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun, your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond (1) Damascus.*

We allow that there is some difficulty in determining the true sense of the terms, which Amos uses in this passage; that criticks are (2) much divided with regard to them, and that it is not clear whether the prophet means to speak here of one, two, or even three false deities.

But, whatever meaning is given to these words, and whatever deities must be understood, it is clear that Amos does not say here, that *the Israelites in the wilderness, always worshipped strange gods, or, that they acknowledged none but strange gods, or, that they did not worship Adonai till after.* By this interrogation, *have ye offered me?* the prophet does not mean to rebuke them for never having offered any sacrifices to the Lord, during the forty years which they spent in the wilderness; but with their having been faithless, and having forsaken him for gods which they

(1) *Damascus.* See Amos, ch. 5. 26. *Aut.*

(2) *Much divided.* Some for instance think that *Kium*, signifies image, and we have translated it thus, with the Vulgate. Others make it the name of a god; which they believe to have been the Chronos of the Greeks, and the Saturn of the Latins.

Mr. Voltaire commits one of his usual small mistakes when he makes Amos say, that the Jews in the wilderness worshipped Rempham and Kium, [it would have been better to write Kiun] Amos does not speak of Rempham but only of Kiun, which the Septuagint has rendered by Rempham. Therefore Rempham and Kiun are not, as he seems to think, two false deities. There are two names for the same god, the one Hebrew, the other Egyptian. It is evident that the illustrious writer, in speaking of this passage, had not the original text before him, and that probably he is not so well acquainted with this passage as he ought to be. *Aut.*



had made unto themselves. This does not contradict Moses ; therefore it is not what Amos says, but what you make him say, which *it would be hard to reconcile with the accounts in the Pentateuch.*

As to Jeremiah, if instead of quoting, as you do, a detached passage, you had added to it what goes before and after, the pretended contradiction between the Pentateuch and the prophet, would soon have disappeared.

In this noble chapter, which we invite you to read over again, fir, the prophet means to shew the Jews, that the ceremonies and sacrifices on which they built their hopes, were of no value in the sight of God, without their obedience to the moral law? *ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, saith he, and swear falsely, and come, and stand before me, in this house, which is called by my name! Be gone. Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices and eat flesh; for,* says he, in order to shew them that he prefers the observance of the moral law, to any sacrifice, *I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings, or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people, and walk ye in all the ways that I commanded you, that it may be (1) well unto you.*

Tindal quoted this passage as well as you, and with his usual honesty ; he also left out the conclusion, because he saw that it explains the whole, and determines the true sense of it. It is evident, that it is not Jeremiah's intention to deny, that God had required sacrifices from our fathers in the wilderness, and that they had offered him some, but to make them sensible, that obedience to his law was required above all things, and in preference to all burnt-offerings.

Before Jeremiah, Isaiah had introduced the Lord, speaking nearly in the same terms to his people,

(1) *Well unto you.* Jeremiah, ch. 7. v. 20. *Aut.*



(1) *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams. Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me.* But he adds, and let us observe by the way, that this Jewish philosophy, is as good as that of the moderns, *wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings, seek judgment, and relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow, &c. &c. Come now and let us reason together.* Was Isaiah telling our fathers, that God required no more sacrifices? No, certainly, the prophet offered sacrifices himself, and the law ordered it; but he meant to tell them, that justice and mercy are more pleasing to the Lord, than the most sumptuous burnt-offerings.

In this same sense another prophet says, *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice*; that is, I prefer the one to the other. Nothing is more common in the sacred writings, than this manner of expressing the preference which is given to one thing above another. To take advantage of such passages, as Tindal has done, shews either ignorance of our language, or want of sincerity. What sort of a guide is this, sir, whom you follow so implicitly? Were you formed to walk in his steps thus blindly, and to repeat without examination his most frivolous objections?

But even suppose the two texts which you quote were obscure, could they reasonably be put in competition with that multitude of passages so precise and clear, which attest that the Israelites worshipped Adonai in the wilderness; and that even then they offered him sacrifices? You act evidently against the intention of two prophets, if you make them say the contrary, and you put them in contradiction not only with Moses, but with themselves. For in Amos, Adonai reminds the Jews, that (2) *he had brought them up from the land of Egypt, and led them forty years*

(1) *To what purpose.* Isaiah, ch. I. v. II. *Aut.*

(2) *He had brought them, &c.* Amos, ch. 2. v. 10.



*thro' the wilderness.* And in Jeremiah, he upbraids them, saying, that he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, according to the covenant which he made with their fathers, which covenant they broke. Did Adonai conduct them thro' the wilderness, and make a covenant with them, without their having acknowledged him as their god? They forsake him for other gods. They had therefore worshipped him before they served these new divinities.

§ 3. *Whether no mention is made of any act of worship of the Jewish nation in the wilderness.*

But, you say, some criticks assert, that no act of  
 “ worship is ascribed to this people in the wilderness,  
 “ no passover celebrated. No pentecost. No men-  
 “ tion made of having celebrated the feast of taber-  
 “ nacles. No publick prayer appointed. And last-  
 “ ly, circumcision, that seal of the covenant between  
 “ God and Abraham, was not put in practice.”

It would be hard to collect so many mistakes in fewer words. To begin. *Circumcision was not put in practice in the wilderness.* This is true, and you should have recollected it (1) in another place, where you affirm the contrary.

*No publick prayer appointed.* Perhaps the hours were not fixed, nor the forms settled, as (2) they were since; but certainly the Israelites did not remain forty years in the wilderness without publick prayer. And do we not frequently see in the Pentateuch, the people assembled before the Lord to worship him, implore his assistance, or mitigate his wrath? Was not this publick prayer? Those criticks think they have a right to deny the appointment of it in general, because it is not formally expressed in the books of Moses; but neither is it to be found in Joshua, or the Judges. Do they imagine, that during this long space of time, the Jews had no publick prayer?

(1) *In another place.* See the Philos. Diction. article circumcision. *Aut.*

(2) *They were since.* They were never fixed by the law, which ordered nothing with regard to this, but only by custom. *Edit.*



*No pentecost. No mention of the feast of tabernacles.* No; but ought this to surprize those criticks? Have they not read, that the former of these was to be celebrated *from such time as they began to put the sickle to the corn, and the latter, after they had gathered in their corn and (1) their wine.* Or do they not recollect, that our fathers neither sowed nor reaped in the wilderness. One of the ceremonies, ordered in the feast of tabernacles, was, to erect tents, or green arbours, to recal to their minds, that they had spent forty years under tents, in the wilderness. And was it not natural then to wait till they had gone out of the wilderness, to observe these ceremonies? Therefore, by the very law of their institution, these two festivals were not to take place, until the Israelites had entered into the promised land. *Cum ingressi fueritis terram quam dabo vobis.* (2) Leviticus, ch. 23. Nothing, therefore, ought to surprize us here, but the amazement of those writers!

*No passover celebrated.* This they affirm, and here follows what the scripture says, *And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year, after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season, in the fourteenth day of this month at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the wilderness of Sinai.* Numbers, ch. 9. v. 1.

It is true, that it is not said in scripture, that the Jews celebrated any other passover in the wilderness. But did our fathers celebrate no passovers, but those which are mentioned in it? If this be the case, we must conclude, that they celebrated it but once or twice from the time of Moses to that of Josias. This,

A a

(1) *Their wine.* See Deuteronomy, ch. 16 v. 1, 13. *Aut.*

(2) *Leviticus, ch. 23.* One of the motives of the institution and celebration of these feasts, was to return thanks to God for his gifts, by offering him the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, which had been gathered in. *Aut.*



I suppose, your criticks will not maintain. Besides, is it very certain that the celebration of the passover was commanded in the wilderness? (1) Some learned men think not.

*The scripture, say your criticks lastly, mentions no religious act of the people in the wilderness. But it speaks of the construction, erection, and consecration of the tabernacle, and of the altar, of that of Aaron and his children, of that of the sacred vessels, &c. It shews us an high priest, priests, a whole tribe consecrated to the service of the altar. Could the Hebrews be possessed of every thing belonging to worship, without ever performing any act of worship? It speaks of the sacred fire kept up on the altar of burnt-offerings, of the incense which was burned on the altar of incense. Are not these so many religious acts? It shews us Aaron, with the censer in his hand, invoking the name of the Almighty for Israel; his children put to death for having offered a strange fire before the Lord; and Corah, with his party, contending with the brother of Moses for the sacerdotal office. Do not all these facts, which happened in the wilderness, suppose some religious acts done there?*

The most solemn *act of religion* is sacrifice; and it is of this in particular that the criticks certainly speak. But how can they say that there never is any mention made of sacrifices, offered by the Israelites in the wilderness? Probably they never read the 24th chapter of Exodus, where we are told, that *Moses built an altar under mount Sinai. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord.* They never read the book of Numbers, where it is said, in the ninth chapter, that at the consecration of the tabernacle, the chiefs of the tribes present-

(1) *Some learned men.* We must observe however that the book of Leviticus, whilst it places the feast of pentecost, and that of tabernacles, among those which were not to be celebrated till they came to the land of promise, says nothing of the passover. *Aut.*



ed unto Moses thirty-six bulls, seventy-two rams, and so many lambs, to be sacrificed to the Lord. Nor have they read the eighth chapter of Leviticus, where Moses, whilst he is consecrating Aaron, offers a sacrifice of expiation, and an whole burnt-offering. Nor the ninth chapter of this book, where, after Aaron has offered divers sacrifices for himself, and for the people, a fire sent from heaven, instantly consumes the flesh of the victims laid on the altar. Nor the sixteenth chapter of the same, where the sacrifice of the scape-goat is ordered, and where it is added, that *Aaron did what Moses had commanded*.

No, they have read nothing, at least with attention. The scriptures which they criticise, are quite new to them, or very superficially understood by them. For it would be too great a breach of honesty in them, to affirm boldly, that the scriptures mention no religious act performed in the wilderness, if they had been thoroughly acquainted with them.

§ 4. *Why the Pentateuch mentions no religious act of the Hebrews in the wilderness, for the space of thirty-eight years. In what sense the sacred writers may have said, that the Hebrews served strange gods during forty years.*

We must not however conceal, that in the recital of what happened to the Israelites, during forty years, we find an interval of thirty-eight years, in which the Pentateuch makes no mention of any sacrifices, or any other religious act. The reason of it is clear, and you would have seen it, if you had read those sacred books with a little more care. The Pentateuch entirely omits the recital, of what passed during this whole space of time. You may observe, sir, that Moses's recital terminates towards the end of the second year, and that he does not resume the thread of it, until the first month of the fortieth year.

In this interval, doubtless, must be placed those long and frequent relapse into idolatry, which Moses, Joshua, Amos, &c. upbraid them with, and which



we do not deny. This dereliction, so often repeated, of the worship of Jehovah, those apostacies which became so frequent, added to those of the first year, and to that of the fortieth, in which *they joined themselves to Beelphegor*, were sufficient to make our prophet say, in the oratorical style, that this faithless nation *had served strange gods during forty years in the wilderness*. These holy men spoke conformably to the genius of their language and their age. They did not cavil about words. It is a feeble and childish resource to strain their expressions at this time, in order to make them contradict the legislator. This sir, is a piece of chicanery, very unworthy of a writer of your learning and reputation.

§ 5. *Strange gods worshipped by the Israelites in the wilderness. Whether Moses tolerated them. Passage of the book of Joshua.*

Your criticks take advantage of the following passage of Joshua, ch. 24. v. 22. *And Joshua said unto the people, ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him, and they said we are witnesses. Now therefore put away the strange gods, that are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, the Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.* From this they infer, that the Jews had indisputably other gods, besides Adonai under Moses. Alas! who denies it? The scripture affirms it in numberless places. But does it follow, that because they had other gods in the wilderness besides Adonai, therefore they never worshipped him in it, and never acknowledged him until they had left it?

*These gods therefore, you say, were tolerated by Moses.* We shall observe, 1st, That to tolerate irregularities, which one would wish to prevent, without having the power, is not the same thing as to grant full liberty of committing them. 2dly, When the greatest part of the nation forsook the Lord for



strange gods, how could Moses avoid tolerating the idolators? They shook off at once, the yoke of both civil and religious obedience, and added rebellion to idolatry. Miracles then would be necessary to punish them. God only could do it, and so he did it. 3dly, The scripture which tells us, that the Jews during the thirty-eight years, of which the relation is omitted in the Pentateuch, worshipped the host of heaven, Moloch, &c. tells us also, that they all died in the wilderness, under the hand of the Lord. This is all we know of the matter, and all that your criticks can know of it. The scripture is silent with regard to every thing else. 4thly, You therefore know not what happened, and yet you propose this event, as a model of conduct to the powers of this world. Truly, they are well instructed.

§ 6. *A passage of Deuteronomy, which the criticks misinterpret.*

You quote the following passage of Deuteronomy, ch. 12. v. 8. *Ye shall not do, after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.* You and your criticks infer from this, that Moses left our fathers at entire liberty with regard to worship and that under his administration, they might serve, just as they chose, the gods whom they liked best.

But what a wretched piece of criticism is this inference! Whoever will pursue this chapter cursorily, will find that the liberty in question, respected only the offering sacrifices sometimes in one place, sometimes in another, because they had then no fixed place. *Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever, is right in his own eyes, for ye are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you, but when ye go over Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, then there shall be a place, which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there, thither shall ye bring all that I command you, your burnt-offerings and*



*your sacrifices, your tithes, &c. &c.* This liberty might perhaps be extended still further to the omission of some other rites, such as circumcision, various oblations and purifications, &c. &c. which the Israelites could not put into regular practice during their travels. But indeed nothing except the impartial eye of your criticks, could see in this passage, an *entire liberty* given to the Israelites, of worshipping what gods they pleased.

§ 7. *Whether Moses transgressed the law he had given of making no images. Brazen serpent. Bulls of Solomon.*

But here is something still better. “Moses himself seems now to transgress the law which he had made. He forbid all images, yet he put up the brazen serpent. Solomon caused twelve bulls to be engraved.” &c. &c.

You might have added, to give strength to this little objection, that the legislator ordered the figures of cherubims (1) to be worked, and embroidered on the vails of the tabernacle, and of the sanctuary. That he commanded cherubims of gold to be placed over the ark, which they covered with their wings &c. &c. And yet *he did not transgress the law which he had given*, because it did not absolutely prohibit the making any image or likeness; but the making it *with intent of worship*. Thus our fathers understood it, and thus did even Josephus. Now Moses did not make the brazen serpent, nor the cherubims with intent of worship. You allow that the

(1) *To be worked and engraved.* Our fathers had learned these arts in Egypt. This passage of the Pentateuch, agrees with what profane authors tell us, that the Egyptians, *a people*, as you say, *in all ages contemptible*, had invented the art of working upon stuffs, and carried that of embroidery to an high perfection, which they borrowed, it is said, from the Babylonians. The learned Count de Caylus, in his new Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions, speaks of two figures of Egyptian porcelain equal to that of Japan, and which has all the marks of the most remote antiquity. Perhaps this is a new proof, that this *contemptible people* had no smattering of chymistry.

As to the figures of the cherubims, if we may judge of them by the description of Ezekiel, and by what Mr. Voltaire says of them, they were figures composed of various parts of different animals, a kind of whimsical paintings, or hieroglyphics, imitated after the Egyptians who adorned their temples with them.



ancient Jews paid them no kind of adoration, and when in process of time, they began to do so, a pious king caused the image to be destroyed. Moses's conduct does not contradict the law, but the interpretation you are pleased to give of it.

These are the reflections which we made, after perusing what you have said of toleration, under the government of Moses, this great man certainly gave all the indulgence which was consistent with a wise and good administration, that delights not in severity, but however uses it, where it is indispensable and may be useful. This you might have shewn by the accounts in the Pentateuch, and in this respect, the conduct of Moses might have been proposed as a pattern to the rulers of this world. But to charge him with an absolute indifference, with regard to worship, to assert that he left the Hebrews at *entire liberty*, upon an object so important in the mind of every wise legislator, and in order to confirm these assertions, and to cast a ridicule on the Pentateuch, by placing it in contradiction with the prophets, to add that the sacred writers affirm, *that our fathers acknowledged none but strange gods in the wilderness, that they performed no acts of worship there, and never served Jehovah until after they left it.* All this is misrepresenting the known character of Moses, and contradicting without reason or profit, not only the Pentateuch and the prophets, but all the scriptures and traditions. We think that these assertions, so false and so derogatory from the excellence of your works, should not have found a place in them, or ought to be expunged out of them.

We are, &c. &c.



## LETTER V.

*Whether the celebrated writer, is more successful in his proofs of the practice of toleration in the Jewish state, from the history of the Judges and the Kings, and from the conduct and the writings of the prophets? Explanation of different passages of scripture. False reasoning, mistakes, misapplications of the critick.*

**Y**OU endeavour, sir, still further to establish your ideas of toleration, by the history of our judges and our kings, and upon the conduct and writings of our prophets. We shall now see, with what exactness you quote all these facts, and with what justness you apply them.

FACTS TAKEN FROM THE HISTORY OF  
THE JUDGES.

§ 1 *Passage in the book of Judges, where Jephtha speaks of Chamos.*

You first produce a passage out of the book of judges, chap. 11. Where Jephtha says to the Ammonites, *will not thou possess that which Chamos thy god giveth thee to possess? So, whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.* “This declaration is precise, you say, it may lead us very far, but it is at least a clear proof, that God tolerated Chamos. For the holy scripture does not say, you think you have a right to those lands which you say have been given you by the god Chamos; it says positively, you have a right, *tibi jure debentur*, which is the true sense of those Hebrew words, *otho tiraſch.*”

*God tolerated Chamos.* Therefore intolerance was not always practiced in the Jewish state. We must confess, sir, that it is not given to us to feel the justness of this inference.



God tolerated Chamos, as he tolerated all the gods of the idolatrous nations. What is the purport of this, and what does it lead to?

Other writers, Tindal for instance, who have quoted this passage before, drew the same conclusion from it that you want to draw, Dict. Philos. and Philos. of History, *that Jephtha acknowledged Chamos for a true god*. But do we not reason every day against people after their own principles, supposing them for a moment true, altho' we believe them false? this is what Jephtha does and certainly *this cannot lead us very far*.

The learned quotation of the Hebrew words *otha tirsach, tibi jure debentur*, may dazzle some female readers, but does not invalidate our answer.

When we say to a Mahometan, "You must obey the law of your prophet, therefore you must not drink wine;" do we look upon obedience to the law of Mahomet as a real obligation, and on the impostor as a prophet?

§ 2. *Of Michas and of the six hundred men of the tribe of Dan.*

But here follows a difficulty, which would have appeared stronger, if you had not yourself weakened it. It is the history of Michas and the Danites, related in the 17th and 18th chapters of the book of Judges.

"Michas's mother, you say, had lost one thousand  
"one hundred pieces of silver. Her son restored  
"them to her. She consecrated this money to the  
"Lord, and caused idols to be made out of it. She  
"built a small chapel, a Levite officiated in it. And  
"Michas cried out, now the Lord will be good to  
"me, for I have in my house a priest of the tribe of  
"Levi. In the mean time, six hundred men of the  
"tribe of Dan, who were preparing to take possession  
"of some village, having no Levitical priests  
"with them, and wanting them, in order that God  
"might prosper their undertaking, went to Michas's house, took away his ephod, his idols and



“ the Levite. Then they boldly attacked a village  
 “ called Lais, and put every thing to fire and sword.  
 “ They gave the name of Dan to Lais, in token of  
 “ their victory. They placed Michas’s idol upon the  
 “ altar, and what is much more remarkable, Jona-  
 “ than, the grandson of Moses, was the high priest  
 “ of this temple, where the God of Israel, and the  
 “ idol of Michas were worshipped.”

Michas *had idols*. True, but in what time? In  
 a time, says the book of Judges, *when there was no  
 king in Israel, but every man did that which was right  
 in his own eyes*. The scripture makes this observation  
 thrice in this chapter, which should not have escaped  
 you. Is it wonderful that in this season of anarchy,  
 an individual should have committed such a crime  
 with impunity? And what can you conclude from it?  
 Wise governments ought not to draw precedents  
 from what happens in times of confusion.

You will say, perhaps, that the Danites persevered  
 longer in this worship. We allow it, but are you  
 sure that this worship was publick enough to be  
 known in Israel? At least, it was very far from hav-  
 ing that splendour and celebrity, which you suppose.  
 You give the Danites, *a temple, an high priest*; but  
 this *temple* was built in your imagination, and we are  
 indebted to that also, for the title of *high priest*, with  
 which you decorate Jonathan. We are not at all  
 surprized at these exaggerations. In the same strain  
 of impartiality, the high priest and the temple are  
 placed in *a village*, and the temple of Jerusalem is call-  
 ed *a country barn*.

Perhaps the priest of Dan, was the grandson of Mo-  
 ses. The most pious men, we see the case too often,  
 have not always suitable descendants. However, sir,  
 altho’ the vulgate makes Jonathan grandson of the le-  
 gislator, yet the Chaldaick paraphrase, the Septua-  
 gint, the Hebrew text, &c. give him Gerson for fa-  
 ther, and Manasse for grandfather. Thus what you  
 look upon as remarkable, may be false, or at least ve-  
 ry doubtful.



However this be, if (1) Lais or Dan was *a village*, might it not happen, that a fact which happened *in a village*, at the extremity of the country, should not be known in Israel?

Let us go a step farther. Is it very certain that Michas and the Danites *worshipped idols*? Some great-criticks deny it, and very lately a learned Englishman undertook their defence. He does it, we think, (2) in a very plausible manner, and altho' he gives no demonstration, yet we may fairly conclude from what he says, that the idolatry of Michas and the Danites, is not so incontestable as you suppose it.

But let us not adopt this conjecture, altho' it be ingenious, and rests on the authority of the learned Grotius. Let us confess, with the greatest part of the commentators, that the Danites, in open defiance of the law, worshipped the Lord under the figure of an idol, which was taken from Michas. But it would be proper to fix the period, and duration of this worship, if you want to make it so striking an example of toleration as you pretend. Now, in this you have

(1) *Lais*. It was a city inhabited by the Sidonians, it was situated at the foot of Mount Libanus near the source of the Jordan. *Aut.*

(2) *In a very plausible manner*. He thinks that the mother of Michas, as she lived far from Shilo, where the tabernacle then was, and found herself thus deprived of the comfort of going often thither to worship the Lord, resolved to remove this inconvenience. That with this intent, she consecrated the money which her son restored her, to the building a chapel, or house of prayer, for herself and her neighbours. That in the earliest times of the Jewish commonwealth, these houses of prayer, *proseuchæ*, were common thro' the country; that what the vulgate renders by *sculptilia* and *conflatilia*, and even these Latin terms, do not signify solely and exclusively *idols*, but all kinds of works, engraven or molten, such as a portable altar, candlesticks, and other utensils for the use of the chapel, in imitation of what was practised in the tabernacle. That altho' this chapel is called in some versions, *house of gods*, the text may be rendered—and has been rendered by some interpreters, *house of god*. That the *Elohim*, the gods, which Michas had got made, and which he loudly reclaimed, might have been only the utensils employed in worship, which the author proves by various passages of scripture. According to him, then Michas's crime was not his having had idols, but having imitated in his chapel, the worship paid to God in his tabernacle, and having thought himself dispensed by this, from going to Shiloh to worship, and having brought over his neighbours to this schism. Indeed it is hard to conceive how the mother of Michas, could consecrate her one thousand one hundred pieces of silver to the Lord, in order to make up idols of them; and how Michas and the Danites could flatter themselves, that they were particularly favoured by the Lord, *because they had idols with them*.



not, nor can have any certainty. If some critics place it so far back as the death of Joshua, and of his council of elders, others maintain, and I think with some reason, that it did not begin till after the death of Samson, and that it ended when the ark was taken and the Danites were dispossessed of their conquests, by the victorious Philistines. Of these two opinions, one is at least doubtful; according to the other, which seems to us the most probable, this worship was tolerated only in times of anarchy, and under the weak and unhappy administration of Heli. We think sir, that an instance taken from such troubled times, and of so uncertain a date, proves but little, (1) if it proves any thing.

§ 3. *Worship of Baal-Berith.*

Altho' some learned men, have doubted whether Michas, and the Danites, worshipped idols, no one ever disputed this, that our fathers paid an idolatrous worship to Baal-Berith; but your notions with regard to this worship do not appear very exact.

“The Hebrews, you say, after the death of Gideon, worshipped (2) Baal-Berith, for near twenty years, and they renounced the worship of Adonai, without making any prince, judge, or priest, cry out murder. I allow their transgression was great, but if this piece of idolatry was tolerated, how much more should these differences be, which subsist in the true worship!”

But who informed you, sir, that the Hebrews worshipped Baal-Berith, *for near twenty years*? The scripture mentions this worship, but fixes not the du-

(1) *If it proves any thing.* This proof is still the more weak, because that contrary to the institution of Moses, the Hebrews, after Joshua, neglected for a long time to appoint chiefs, who like him, were to have a general authority over all Israel. That the greatest part of the Judges who succeeded him, were acknowledged only by their own tribe, and that not one of them perhaps down to Samuel, had power sufficient to make the true religion flourish. Therefore it is not surprising, that at a time when the authority of government was so weak, and when the Cananeans were still masters of part of the country, an idolatrous worship, should have been kept up with impunity among some Danites on the frontier. See Chais on the Book of Judges. *Edit.*

(2) See Judges, ch. 8. v. 33.



tation of it. Perhaps this piece of idolatry, which began after the death of Gideon, ended at the time that Thola became a judge. We think we have reason to draw this conclusion, from what the sacred writer says, that *God, moved undoubtedly by the repentance of his people, raised them a deliverer in the person of this judge.* Can you produce any proofs to the contrary?

'Tis a misfortune that the scripture does not say, that *some priest cried out murder.* Your writers would then have had a noble opportunity of declaring against priests.

But had you reason to be surprized, that *no prince or judge condemned those crimes?* Alas! sir, what judge could do it, at a time when there were no judges? For surely you do not insert Abimelech, in the number of the judges. A zeal for religion, and a love of order, were not to be expected from such a monster.

*If this piece of idolatry was tolerated, &c.* Is it astonishing that it was so, in a time of confusion and tyranny? What! sir, is it a tyrant, such as Abimelech? Is it what passed under the odious and tottering administration of this usurper, which you propose as a model to sovereigns? Truly you are ingenious in finding out examples!

§ 4. *Of the Bethsamites who were struck dead, returning from the ark. The critics reflections on this subject.*

If we are to believe you, sir, some persons produce as a proof of intolerance, the severity which God shewed to the Bethsamites; and it must be granted, that you refute this notion, in a triumphant manner. There is but one thing to be observed, which is, that this notion never yet came into any body's head.

No, sir, nobody ever yet reasoned so ill. The whole is an ungrounded supposition on your part. You know this well, but you wished to bring in this piece of our history, and you found no other way of



doing it. Indeed the turn is not happy, let us see whether the reflections at least are just.

“The Lord, you say, cut off fifty-thousand and  
“seventy of his people, merely because they had  
“looked on the ark, which they ought not to have  
“looked on. Such a mighty difference there is, be-  
“tween the laws, the times, the Jewish œconomy,  
“and every thing that we are acquainted with. The  
“unsearchable ways of God, are so far superior to  
“ours! The severity shewn to this great number of  
“persons, says the judicious Don Calmet, will ap-  
“pear extraordinary, only to those who have not  
“considered to what a degree God required fear  
“and respect from his people, and to those who mea-  
“sure the views and schemes of providence, by the  
“weak light of their reason.” Such are the reflec-  
tions, very foreign to your subject, which you have  
thought fit to insert in your treatise. You seemed to  
be in great haste to give them to the publick.

Altho’ the answer of the learned religious, does  
not seem at all to us, such as (1) you represent it, yet  
we chuse to give another, which is better calculated  
for a man, who is so well acquainted with Hebrew as  
you are, and who can consult manuscripts and settle  
texts. The answer is, that it is by no means clear,

(1) *You represent it*. Even suppose the number of those daring culprits,  
was as great as Don Calmet supposes, even if we were under the necessity,  
which we certainly are not, of adopting the general opinion of interpreters,  
would there be any thing so very unreasonable in this account?

When human governments sacrifice thousands to the support of law, and  
the glory of the state, their wisdom is extolled. And can we not conceive  
that God may destroy fifty thousand culprits to avenge his laws, which have  
been infringed, and his majesty that has been insulted? “God, says a cele-  
“brated writer, Grotius, is absolute lord of our lives, and may without giv-  
“ing any reason, and at what time he pleases, take away this his free gift.”  
Let us not then be surpris’d at his taking it away from sacrilegious people,  
who according to the law, had deserved to lose it. As severe as this chastise-  
ment may appear, is it comparable to those dreadful scourges, which his a-  
venging hand sometimes inflicts on guilty nations?

Attend to this. Self love is a partial judge. A secret bent to ourselves, puts  
us in the place of the culprits, and because we think we are something, we  
dare accuse God of injustice: O man, light vapour! which dost appear to-  
day, just to disappear to-morrow, dost thou think thy life so important an ob-  
ject in the sight of the Almighty, and dost thou totally forget thy nothing-  
ness, and his power! *Christ.*



that fifty thousand and seventy men, were struck dead on this occasion.

And in fact is it likely that fifty thousand and seventy men went to look into the ark, and is it a probable supposition, that so many persons indulged themselves in so criminal a curiosity?

Agreeably to this, the authors of the Arabick, and Syriac versions, seem to have read no more in their manuscripts, than *five thousand men of the people*. Josephus goes still farther. This sacerdotal historian, who no doubt, possessed exact manuscripts, reckons no more than seventy persons put to death. And the learned Kennicott, has lately informed the publick, that he found no more in the two ancient manuscripts which he collated.

These variations in the numbers, induce a natural suspicion, of some alteration in this text. But the suspicion is confirmed, when we consider, that the Hebrew text, as it is found in the printed bibles, and in most of the manuscripts, if taken literally, would signify that God struck *seventy men, fifty thousand men*, which forms no sense at all.

In short, the alteration, which we believe was made in this passage, is not one of those which can scarcely be expected from a good transcriber. The omission is merely (1) of a single particle and letter.

It is not even necessary to admit, that there was ever any alteration in the text. If we suppose with the learned Bochart, and Le Clerc, &c. that this particle is understood, which is agreeable to the genius of the Hebrew language, and to the constant practice of the interpreters, we may translate the passage, in this very plain and natural way, *God struck seventy men out of fifty thousand*; and thus the number becomes the same that Josephus

(1) *Of a single particle and letter.* The *ו* of the Hebrews. It is a particle which answers to *a* or *ex, de, sed* of the Latins. Like other Hebrew particles, it is joined to nouns. Mr. Voltaire, who, they say, understands Hebrew, and who quotes it, as if it was his mother tongue, will feel better than any one, the truth of this reflection. *Exit.*



says, and doctor Kennicot's two manuscripts. Therefore it is not certain, that fifty thousand men were put to death on this occasion.

In vain, after having exaggerated the number of the Bethsamites, probably far beyond truth, you tell us, in order to extenuate their crime, that *God condemned them to death because they had looked on the Ark, which they ought not to have looked on.* No one can form a doubt of their guilt. They must have known, that by an express law, even the Levites were forbidden under pain of death, to touch the ark, and to look on it when it was uncovered. Nevertheless, in defiance of these prohibitions, the Bethsamites dared to come near it, rashly fixed their eyes on it, and according to the Hebrew text, uncovered and (1) *looked into it.* What difficulty can there be, in supposing that God chastised this publick and wilful act of disobedience, this distrustful and sacrilegious curiosity, by the death of *seventy culprits.* And that whilst he was miraculously restoring to his people, the ark of the testimony, he inflicted such an exemplary punishment on them, as might keep all others hereafter in due respect. In short the crime of the Bethsamites deserved death by law, and the number of those who suffered, has nothing incredible in it. Therefore now judge of your sarcasms.

Your reflections fall therefore, on a contested fact. Whatever opinion we adopt of this fact, they are false. They have, according to your confession, no relation to the object you have in view. You should have inserted nothing in your treatise, but what was certain and useful, and not have overloaded it with such empty rubbish.

To sum up. You mention four facts, in order to prove toleration, by the history of our judges. Of these, the first and fourth are out of the question,

(1) *Looked into it.* This is the sense of the text, and many learned interpreters understand it so. *Aut.*



the third proves toleration only in a time of anarchy and confusion. And it is not clear, that the second proves any thing at all. These are truly solid reasonings, and very conclusive examples!

*FACTS TAKEN FROM THE HISTORY OF THE  
KINGS.*

Perhaps the examples which you have taken from the history of our kings, will be more conclusive. Let us read them.

“Solomon enjoys peace in the midst of his idolatry. Jeroboam causes golden calves to be erected, and reigns during twenty years. The little kingdom of Judea, under Rehoboam, raises altars and statues to strange gods. The holy king Aza, destroys not the high places. In short we cannot find any constraint, with respect to religion.”

It is easy to perceive here too, that you write in great haste, or that you are but little acquainted with our history.

§ 1. *Idolatry of Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, &c. What they prove in favour of toleration.*

Solomon was an idolater, but was he so unpunished? We have observed before, the days of his apostacy, were not the prosperous part of his reign. As soon as the ties of religion were dissolved, the monarch gradually lost the hearts of his subjects. His authority was enfeebled, and God who alone had the privilege of trying and punishing him, hastened to denounce vengeance on him, and to let fall that arm on his own head, which was afterwards to inflict (1) such dreadful blows on his family.

But suppose Solomon had been idolatrous, and enjoyed peace, would this be a sound argument in favour of your opinion, concerning toleration? Would it have been surprising, if subjects who had been long inured to obedience, should, either thro' respect or fear, have winked at the false steps of

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(1) *Such dreadful blows.* See on the idolatry of Solomon and its consequences, kings, Book III. ch. 11. &c.



a king, who had formerly ruled over them, with so much wisdom and glory? And is it the purport of your treatise, to enquire whether subjects ought to tolerate their sovereigns, or sovereigns their subjects, when they profess a different worship from the established? Solomon was an idolater, but Solomon was a king, and an unhappy king. Therefore his example should not be produced with so much confidence.

(1) *Jeroboam and Rehoboam erected idols.* True, sir, and many of our kings imitated their impiety. But in these great revolts, in which kings and subjects, hurried away by the example of their kings, forsook the worship of their fathers for strange gods, how was it possible, for the small number of the faithful in Israel, not to tolerate the crowd of rebels? Who doubts but that oppressed religions ought to tolerate the predominant?

§ 2. *Conduct of Aza, and other kings. Whether they were tolerant? Misapplications of the learned critick.*

*The holy king Aza, you say, destroys not the high places.* 1st. The worship of high places, altho' unlawful, was not idolatrous. Therefore, it was a weakness, a prudential act, bordering on timidity, to permit this, but it could not well be called toleration, in the sense you mean.

2dly, Be it as it will, perhaps Aza, after having done so much to re-establish the true worship in his kingdom, feared to incense the minds of men, if he went any farther. He thought proper to yield to necessity. And we do not suppose, that it is the bent of your treatise, to teach sovereigns to endure what they cannot prevent. No one doubts it.

3dly, Our history represents this holy king to us, *banishing from his kingdom every abomination, punishing idolatry, even in the person of his mother, swearing with his whole people, to put any one amongst them to death, who would not seek with all his heart, (2)*

(1) *Jeroboam and Rehoboam.* See Book III. of Kings, ch. 12. and 14, &c.

(2) *God of their fathers.* See Paralipomena, ch. 15. Book II.



*the God of their fathers* ; and yet you place him in the list of tolerating kings !

When we see this pious monarch, and after his example Josaphat, Hezekias, Manasses, Josias, &c. &c. breaking idols, and throwing down their temples, driving their priests and worshippers out of the country, we find it hard to persuade ourselves, that under our kings, *there never was any constraint with respect to religion.*

Do you then in earnest, propose the holy king Aza, as a model of toleration to rulers ? If they followed his steps, we should all of us, sectaries, deists, philosophers, Jews, &c. &c. cry out persecution. Like an unskilful advocate, you hurt the cause, which you think you are defending.

Nothing is wanting now to complete your proof, but to quote Jezabel murdering the prophets of the Lord, Jehu slaughtering in one day all the priests of Baal, Manasses, before his return to the Lord, deluging Jerusalem with the blood of those faithful men, who refused to worship his idols, &c. &c. These would be admirable patterns of toleration, and excellent instances that, under our kings, there was no constraint *with respect to worship.*

What mistakes, what heedlessness is this—Alas, sir, for whom are you writing !

#### FACTS TAKEN FROM THE CONDUCT AND WRITINGS OF THE PROPHETS.

You are not more successful, in proving toleration in the Jewish state, by the conduct and writings of the prophets.

##### § 3. Severity of Elias, and Elisha.

You begin by producing two instances of severity, one of Elias, the other of Elisha. You allow, that this is no proof in favour of toleration. It is only an objection, which you pretend to clear up, in order to



have an opportunity of censuring the conduct of (1) these two prophets.

“Elias, you say, called down fire from heaven, to  
“consume the priests of Baal. Elisha brought bears  
“to devour forty-two little children, who had called  
“him bald-head. But these examples are uncom-  
“mon, and it would be somewhat cruel, to attempt  
“to imitate them.”

Fear not, sir, that any one shall imitate them. Men, who with a word, call the bears from the forest, and the fire down from heaven, will always be scarce on earth. And when we shall find any of them invested with these powers, we shall have good reason to think, that they act upon just motives.

Let us observe by the way, that Elias did not call down fire from heaven *to consume the priests of Baal*, but to punish the guards of Achab, who were presenting the prophet with an order from that impious prince to repair to his court, and who were pushing forward, without any respect for his function, in order to compel him. These are two different facts, which a man so well versed in our history as you are, should not have confounded. You have not read the third book of Kings carefully, which you quote. But *human nature is so weak, and a man has so much business in life*, that these little mistakes, must not be matter of surprize.

§ 2. *Whether Elisha gave Naaman permission to worship idols.*

“But, you add, when Naaman the idolater, asked  
“Elisha to permit him to follow his king into the  
“the temple of Remmon, and to worship with him

(1) *Of these two prophets.* These two facts have been quoted by Tindal as well as those of Joshua, Michas, the Bethsamites, and almost all those which have, or shall be mentioned in the course of this letter. Mr. Voltaire only repeats the English deists words. In these petty criticisms, he is so far from having the honour of invention, that he has not even that of applying them properly. Could he think that no one would ever read Tindal, or be acquainted with the learned answers given to him? What a part do these oracles of philosophy act, these mighty geniuses, who think themselves born to give light to the universe, when they become every moment, the poor copies of a poor writer! *Edit.*



“ there, did not this same Elisha, (1) who had caused  
 “ the children to be devoured by the bears, answer  
 “ him, go in peace ?

*Naaman the idolater !* Naaman, after having been healed by Elisha, had embraced the worship of the God of Israel. Therefore he was not an idolater. The very question which he puts to the prophet proves it. He proposes to him, something like a case of conscience. Naaman had just declared, *that he would offer no more burnt-offering or victims to strange gods, and that he would worship none but the Lord.* As he was determined to keep his word, he enquires from Elisha, not whether he may still worship the idol of Remmon, (for this would have been giving the lie to his late protestation,) but whether he may continue to perform the duties of his office under his master in the idols temple, such as accompanying him thither, giving him the arm, and even bowing his body there, if it was needful for the prince's service. This is the only subject of his enquiry, and all that Elisha permits.

The words, *to worship with him*, by which you render the text, are a little stroke of art, which cannot deceive any one, who understands the Hebrew, or Latin word that answers to them. It does not necessarily signify *worship*, in the modern sense of the word, it also signifies, *to bow or incline the body.*

(1) *Who had caused the children, &c.* We shall add an observation of the damned doctor Leland, to what we have said above on this fact. These children were of Bethel, the chief seat of that idolatry which then prevailed in Israel. Is it inconceivable that an event, which might have happened in the common course of things, may have been so brought about by providence, as to avenge the prophet, who had been insulted when he began his mission, and to punish the idolatrous fathers in their children, who were impious and idolatrous themselves ?

Tindal made one objection more to this fact. We are surprized that Mr. Voltaire has let it escape him, it deserved to be inserted in his two chapters as well as many others. Tindal said it was impossible that two bears should eat forty-two children. But we may answer Tindal, that the Hebrew word signifies *to tear, to pull in pieces*, as well as *to devour*. We thought to relate this, the English deist's objection, because it may give an insight into his character. *Edit.*



Truly, if we cannot see, that this permission obtained by the stranger Naaman, is (1) a convincing proof, that toleration was always practised in the Jewish government, is it our fault?

§ 3. *Idoltrous kings called by the prophet the servants of God.*

Is it our fault again, if we cannot perceive the slightest relation, between the subject which you treat and these words which follow?

“ Nabuchodonozor is called in Jeremiah, the servant of God. The Kir or Korech, or Korroes, whom we call Cyrus, is honoured in the same way. God, in Isaiah, calls him his Christ, his anointed, altho’ he was not anointed, according to the common signification of the word, and that he followed the religion of Zoroaster. He calls him his shepherd, altho’ he was an usurper in the sight of men. There is not in the whole scripture, a stronger token of fondness.” What a deal of learning thrown away!

*The Kir, Korech, or Korroes, This is dust, thrown into the eyes of the unlearned.*

*God calls him his anointed, altho’ he was not anointed, according to the common signification of the word.* What is there surprizing in this? Can words never be used but in their common acceptation? This is a fine reflection indeed!

*Altho’ he followed the religion of Zoroaster.* You are surprized, that this religion was not a bar to the favour of God; and yet you say in another place, that *its followers worshipped none, but the supreme Being and paid him a pure service!*

(1) *A convincing proof.* It will be still less so, if we adopt the explanation which the learned Bochart gives of this passage. According to him, it is not a permission which Naaman requests for the time to come, it is an humble confession of the past, an expression of bitter sorrow; and the answer of the prophet, *go in peace*, has no other object, but to pacify an alarmed conscience. Bochart thinks the original text susceptible of this meaning, and we think so too. Mr. Voltaire is at liberty to adopt this explanation. *Edit.*



*He calls him his shepherd, altho' he was an usurper in the sight of men.* Altho' Cyrus was an usurper in the sight of men, yet he executed the decrees of God on his people. For this reason, he calls him *his shepherd*.

But let us drop these observations, and come to the point. Our prophets do call Nabuchodonozor *the servant of God*, and Cyrus *his anointed, his Christ, his shepherd*. Yes, sir, and this is a proof, that the God of our fathers, was not, as some free-thinkers imagine, a local divinity, a God of a particular people, but the God of the universe, whose providence conducts all events, and extends to all empires. Kings and conquerors are his ministers, and execute none but his commands. They are in his hands, instruments of mercy, or of vengeance. Therefore our prophets very justly call them *his servants, and his ministers*. But does it follow, that toleration was practised in the Jewish state, because idolatrous kings and conquerors, are in this sense, *the servants of the Lord*? All that we shall say is, that the justness of this inference does not appear clearly.

#### §. 4. *A Passage of Malachi.*

“ We see, you say, in Malachi, that from the rising to the setting sun, the name of the Lord is great among the nations, and that pure oblations, are every where offered unto him.”

But as in the time of Malachi, idolatry was spread thro' almost all the nations of the earth, the prophet neither did nor could mean, that then pure oblations, were every where offered unto the Lord. This text therefore, is only a prophecy, of what was to happen on that day, when all nations were to return to the true God. A man who understands Hebrew as well as you do, must know that in this language, the same inflection of the verb, serves to denote the future, as well as the present time. Now what relation has this prophecy with your questions on toleration?



§ 5. *Of the Ninevites, of Melchisedeck, of Balaam, &c.*  
 From Malachi, you suddenly pass to the Ninevites, and to Melchisedeck, &c. “God, you say, protects the idolatrous Ninevites, he threatens and forgives them. Melchisedeck, who was not a Jew, was a priest of God; Balaam, an idolater, was a prophet. The scripture therefore shews us, that God not only tolerated the other nations, but also took a fatherly care of them. And after this, we dare to be intolerant!”

What does all this prove, sir? Does the example of Melchisedeck, who, tho’ not a Jew, was a worshipper and priest of the true God, prove that God tolerated idolaters, or that the Jewish government, was not always intolerant?

*Balaam an idolater.* Are you sure of this? Do you not know, that this is a very doubtful question, which you decide in a moment?

*Balaam an idolater, was a prophet.* Generally those who believe Balaam was an idolater, do not look upon him as a prophet, but as a magician. And those who believe him a prophet, do not look upon him as an idolater, but as an avaricious corrupt man. Be that as it will, Balaam soon obtained the reward due to his crimes, an unhappy death. Thus God tolerates him.

*God tolerates idolaters, and after this, we dare to be intolerant.* An admirable way of reasoning indeed! But God tolerates highway-men too, and would you infer from this, that human governments ought to do so as well as he?

§ 6. *Passages of Ezekiel.*

You conclude, sir, by saying, as a strong proof of toleration in the Jewish government, that the book of Ezekiel, which, according to you, gives the Jewish precepts quite contrary to those, which Moses had formerly given, was inserted into the canon of writers, inspired by God.

“Moses, you say, often tells the Jews, that God punishes the fathers in the children, unto the



“ fourth generation. And yet notwithstanding this  
 “ his express declaration, Ezekiel tells them, that  
 “ the son shall not bear the iniquities of the father.  
 “ He goes even so far, as to make God say, that he  
 “ had given them precepts which were not good.  
 “ But this book was not the less welcome into the  
 “ canon, tho’ it plainly contradicted Moses.”

In order to make this proof conclusive, this pretended contradiction should be shewn to be real, and it should appear, that the ancient Jews acknowledged this. Now neither points can be shewn.

Moses says, that guilty fathers shall be punished unto the fourth generation in their children, who shall happen to be guilty like themselves. Ezekiel says, that children who have not transgressed, shall not be punished for the sins of their fathers. Is there any contradiction in this?

The Jews, during the Babylonish captivity, pretended that they were punished only for the sins of their fathers. *The fathers, said they, have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.* In order to silence them, Ezekiel assures them in the most positive manner, and strongest terms, that if they will cease from following the examples of their fathers, and imitating their crimes, they shall not be punished for them. *Now, lo! saith he, if a man beget a son that seeth all his fathers sins; which he hath done, and considereth, and doth not such like; that hath executed God's judgments, and walked in his statutes, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.* Ezekiel therefore, does not contradict Moses, who speaks only of those children, who followed the evil examples of their fathers, and whom God punishes at the same time, for the crimes of their fathers, and for their own.

Thus a learned Englishman, in his answer to Tindal, who makes the same objection, explains these passages, and this explanation is not new. It is not only that of our most famous modern rabbies, such as Aben Ezra, Solomon, Jarchi, the Talmudist, in the



Guemara, but also, that which the Chaldaick paraphrast, had adopted long before them. They all understood the text of Moses, to mean *rebellious children, who walk in the perverse ways of their fathers*. Neither the ancient Jews, nor the moderns, therefore, ever acknowledged this pretended formal contradiction, which you see in those passages, and which is not in them.

As to what you add, that Ezekiel goes so far as to make God say, *that he had given his people precepts which were not good*; if the prophet had meant by these precepts and laws, given to the Hebrews in the wilderness, those precepts, those laws, which Moses calls *holy, excellent, wonderful*, the contradiction would certainly be plain. But upon opening the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, from which you take this objection, I read the following words, *I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt*, says the Lord, *speaking to the Jews, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord, who sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness, they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Then, I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, in the wilderness to consume them. Nevertheless, mine eye spared them, from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them, in the wilderness. But, I said unto their children in the wilderness, walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols; I am the Lord your God, walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments and do them. Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against me, they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments, to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.*



Ezekiel therefore, does not deny the excellence of those precepts, which God gave the Israelites in the wilderness, and of which Moses extols the goodness. On the contrary, he acknowledges, and thrice repeats, *that these precepts were good, and that if a man do them, he shall even live in them.* So far then Ezekiel agrees perfectly with Moses.

But he adds, still continuing to speak in the person of God, *I lifted up mine hand also to them in the wilderness, that is, I swore to them, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them thro' the countries, because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers idols; wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass thro' the fire, all that openeth the womb.*

As if he had said, because they had rejected my statutes and my precepts, the observance of which would have them live and be happy, *I gave them, that is, (1) I permitted them to follow, very different statutes and precepts.* What statutes and precepts? The cruel rites and detestable practices (2) of idolatrous nations, of the worshippers of Baal-peor, and Moloch, &c. who burned their children, and committed a thousand impurities in honour of these false Gods. These are *the precepts which were not good*, the shameful and fatal observances, to which God had given up the rebellious Israelites, and with which he had suffered them to pollute themselves.

(1) *I permitted them to follow.* I have given them, instead of I permitted them to follow; *I have polluted them*, instead of I let them pollute themselves; *which were not good*; that is, which were detestable. All these figures are so common in scripture, that they cannot stop any person who understands Hebrew but a little. To be sure Mr. Voltaire is not in this case. *Aut.*

(2) *Of idolatrous nations.* We adopt this explanation as the most probable, and the most conformable to the text; it is followed by the Chaldean paraphrast, by South, Wells, the learned Vitringa, &c. Waterland adopts it in his answer to Tindal. *Aut.*



We know that some criticks has given a different explanation of the text, and we do not pretend either to confute or exclude it. But what ever sense is given to this passage, it is clear that Ezekiel did not mean to contradict Moses, with whom he agrees, and that he could not contradict him, without contradicting himself, which I suppose, you do not charge him with.

This pretended *formal contradiction*, then between Ezekiel and Moses, is nothing but a mere cavil, and the argument which you draw from it, in favour of toleration, vanishes along with it.

These, sir, are all the proofs of toleration, which the history of our judges and our kings, the conduct and writings of our prophets, could supply you with. We have omitted none. In earnest, do you think these arguments very solid, and very proper for the purpose of recommending toleration to the rulers of this world? We doubt of it, and we who wish well to toleration, and to whom it is necessary, will tell you a secret, that we think it as yet exceedingly ill proved in your two chapters. Alas! sir, had you nothing better to say? We think you are not nice enough in the choice of your proofs. Observe this, that bad reasons take off from good ones.

We are with the highest esteem, &c.



## LETTER VI.

*Of the different Jewish Sects. Whether they prove that toleration was carried to an high pitch in the Jewish government. Mistakes and contradictions of the learned critick.*

IT seems then, sir, that you find something praiseworthy in the ancient Hebrews. You even think that you may propose them as models to the polished nations of Europe. *The savage clan, this intolerant nation, and (1) of all ancient nations, the most intolerant*, was not only tolerant, but extremely tolerant. This encomium may perhaps appear contradictory to some readers. It is therefore proper to see how far our fathers deserve it.

You ground it on the great opposition that subsisted between the sects which they tolerated. In order to feel the whole force, and solidity of this argument, we must first consider, whether you give a just account of the opinions of those sects; secondly, whether, supposing your account just, they could not tolerate each other, without being extremely tolerant; and lastly, whether they really tolerate each other. Such, sir, is the scope of this letter. It will appear very extraordinary, if after having so often abused our ancestors without foundation, you have now praised them without reason.

§ 1. *Of the Pharisees.*

If we believe you, sir, the Pharisees are of a late

(1) *Of all ancient nations.* If Mr. Voltaire upbraids us with having been the most intolerant nation of all antiquity, we may comfort ourselves, for he upbraids Christians with having been to this time the most intolerant of men. To this pretended intolerance he ascribes the cruel and bloody persecutions which the Christians endured under Nero, Domitian, Maximian, Decius, &c. &c. Roman emperors very tolerant indeed! Every one has heard of their mildness and humanity! *Edit.*



date, and their sect is *not by many years prior to* (1) *your vulgar era.* You go still further in another place; you fix the period of their origin, and you say, that they arose (2) *a very short time before Jesus Christ.*

It is difficult, sir, to reconcile this assertion with the writings of Josephus, who represents them as formidable to sovereigns, even in the time of the high priest Hircan, about one hundred and twenty years before Christ. It is hard to conceive, that a sect which was formidable to sovereigns *one hundred and twenty years before Christ*, and who even then according to yourself, wanted to condemn the high priest to imprisonment (3) and whipping, should have arisen *but a little time before Jesus Christ.*

You add, that the Pharisees *did not arise 'till the time of Hillel.* Now Hillel is supposed to have lived under Herod the great, and you make him yourself cotemporary of Gamaliel, who was (4) the master of Paul. Do you think, sir, that it is easy to conceive, that a sect which was numerous and powerful *one hundred and twenty years before Christ*, could have for its founder, a man who lived under Herod the great, *a cotemporary of Paul's master?* Perhaps Hillel founded this sect when he was in his nurse's arms! Or this Nestor of the Hebrews, lived much longer than the Nestor of the Greeks!

But let us drop these petty contradictions on the origin of the Pharisees, which Cassaubon thinks was prior to the vulgar era, by two hundred years, which Scaliger places (5) under the Maccabees, which

(1) *Your vulgar era.* See Philosoph. Diction. and Phi'os. de l'Histoire.

(2) *A very short time, &c.* See Philosoph. Diction. Art. Resurrection.

(3) *And whipping.* See Philos. of History. Article, *of the Jews since Saul.* Aut.

(4) *The master of Paul.* See Diction. Philosoph. Article *Resurrection.* Aut.

(5) *Under the Maccabees.* Scaliger, Serarius, and Drurius, without daring to determine any thing, believe that the Pharisees may have arisen from that society of Jews, who in the time of the Maccabees, retired into the wilderness to avoid persecution. They were at first called *Assideans*, and afterwards Pharisees, that is, *a separate people*, for so they really were, first by their habitations, and afterwards by their attachment to their traditions, their habit, their austerities, &c. Others have thought that the name of Pharisees



others believe to have been as far back as Esdras, in short, of which all the learned speak with uncertainty, and which you determine with so much precision and (1) confidence.

Let us proceed to the account you give of their doctrine. You say in your text, *that they believed in fate, and the transmigration of souls*, and you add in a note, *the opinion of fate is ancient and universal, 'tis much to call it universal, it is always to be found in Homer. It was supposed by the philosophers.* You want to make people confound the system of the Pharisees, with that of Homer, and the philosophers. Yet there are differences in these systems, which you should have apprized your readers of.

Homer's *fate* is superior even to Jupiter: Fate ordains, Jupiter must obey. That of the philosophers, or at least of some philosophers, is a concatenation of causes and effects without a first cause; or, according to others, a physical and necessary concatenation of causes and effects. The first system is an absurd piece of atheism, and the second seems to take from God his providence, and from man his liberty.

The Pharisees had a salvo for the liberty of man, and the providence of God. Their *fatality*, if we may use this term to explain their sentiments, is providence itself, and its decrees. "The Pharisees," says Josephus, who was himself a Pharisee, and consequently well instructed in their opinion, "believe that the decrees of providence rule all natural events, but they do not take from men free-will. They think that providence which acts in an absolute manner, with regard to natural events, mo-

comes from the word *Paras*, which signifies a reward, because they served God with a view to a reward, and that they maintained in opposition to the Sadducees, future rewards and punishments. *Aut.*

(1) *And confidence.* The origin of the Pharisees, says Basnage, is not known, nor the time in which they began to appear. It is better to confess that the real origin of this sect is unknown, than to make fruitless enquiries after it. See the history of the Jews, Book II. ch. 10. *Aut.*

A Rabbi, who wrote in the twelfth century, thought them more ancient. He pretended to prove the antiquity of the Pharisees by a regular succession from Adam to this time. *Christ.*



“derates its power in acts of virtue and vice, that  
 “they may be free, and worthy of reward or pun-  
 “ishment.”

Such was the fatality of the Pharisees, fir; this is not Homer's fate, nor the fatality of some philosophers, Nor is it (1) yours. That the Pharisees, seems to us to have (2) nothing blame-worthy in it.

Nor is the *metempsychosis* of the Pharisees the same with that of *the admirable fifteenth book of Ovid's Metamorphoses*. The Pharisees believed, that the souls of good men went into a state of the highest happiness, from whence they might return to this world, and animate other human bodies. But at the same time, they held for certain, that the souls of the wicked were shut up for ever in dark dungeons, where they suffered, to all eternity, punishments proportioned to their crimes. These ideas, if we are not mistaken, do not square well with the *Metempsychosis*, *which was brought from the Indies by Pythagoras and sung by Ovid*.

However, as the opinions of the Pharisees did not in any point contradict the law of Moses, we do not see that an high degree of toleration was necessary for tolerating them.

(1) *Nor is it yours*. See, with respect to this, the articles *Chaine des Evenemens, Destinée, Liberté, &c.* of the *Diction. Philosoph.* The author in these maintains an absolute fate. He asserts there, that every thing is *necessary* in the moral, as well as the natural world. That a man has no more liberty than his dog. That our will is *necessarily* determined in consequence of those ideas which present themselves *necessarily* to us, &c. And if you enquire what is to become of liberty, he answers that he does not understand you. And if you ask him, how can divine justice punish crimes which are committed thro' necessity, he tells you, that some people can solve this difficulty, but that he cannot. And if you insist, he adds, “I have *necessarily* the passion of writing this article, and you have the passion to condemn me. We are equally foolish, equally the laughing stock of fate. Thy nature is to do evil, mine is to love truth and to publish it in spite of thee.” This is, truly instructive salutary doctrine, worthy of the oracles of modern philosophy! Such is the comfortable result of all their enquiries, and the happy fruits of their labours! What ignorant and stupid philosophers were our Pharisees in comparison of these gentlemen! *Aut.*

(2) *Nothing blame-worthy in it*. One of their principles, according to Josephus, was, that man, in order to do good, wants the assistance of fate, that is, of providence, and of its grace. Could they explain themselves in a more orthodox way? *Aut.*



§ 2. *Of the Essenes.*

Toleration was still less wanting for the sect of the Essenes, as it was rather a religious order, than a sect of hereticks. It was an association of pious and good men, whom the desire of still higher perfection had united. They were taken up with contemplation, or with agriculture, and other useful arts, and thus led in solitude, a blameless innocent life. They were zealous worshippers of the God of our fathers, *and altho' they offered no sacrifices in the temple*, yet they sent thither their oblations. They highly respected the legislator, and his name was among them in the highest veneration. They looked upon those as blasphemers, who dared to speak ill of him, and, (observe this was no toleration,) they put them to death without mercy.

It is true, they thought that after this life the souls of good men were carried beyond the ocean, to a delightful place, where neither the piercing colds of winter, nor the scorching heats of summer could be felt; and that the souls of the wicked were shut up under the earth in a dark and frozen cave, where they endured eternal torments. But this opinion, which bears some resemblance to that of the Greeks, was not very different from that of the Pharisees, and of the greatest part of the Jews. The Essenes agreed with them as to the fundamental point, future rewards and punishments, and differed from them only as to the place. Might not this slight distinction be tolerated, especially in men who reflected a lustre on their nation (1) by virtues which extorted admiration even from (2) heathens.

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(1) *By virtues &c.* See what Josephus and Philo have said of them. Some Christians have been so struck by it, that they would willingly have inserted them as members of the primitive church *Edit.*

(2) *From heathens.* See Solinus, ch. 38. and Pliny, lib. 5. Pliny observes with Philo, and perhaps after him, that the Essenes distinguished themselves by their continence and disinterestedness; that this extraordinary sect lived without money, and was perpetuated without marriage. Those who died were replaced by new disciples, whom a dislike to the world, and a desire to lead a more retired and virtuous life, brought in from every side. *Esseni gens sola et in toto orbi præter ceteras mira, sine ulla semina, omni venere abdicata,*



Even your divines are not agreed on the place of future (1) rewards and punishments, and yet they tolerate one another. And that famous poet among you, who took it into his head to place hell beyond the sun, in a sphere particularly appointed for this purpose, has not been molested, as far as we know, for so singular an opinion. Do you think, sir, that *an high degree of toleration* was needful for this forbearance?

In short, to say the Essenes were tolerated by the Jews, therefore the Jews were extremely tolerant, is, we think, no unanswerable argument. The weakness of it appears still more, when we place along with it the high encomiums given to the Essenes by Philo and Josephus. Would these two learned Jews have extolled so highly an heretical sect?

§ 3. *Of the Sadducees.*

The toleration which the Sadducees enjoyed, might justly surprize us more, but you have the art of lessening the surprize, by striving to encrease it. “When the immortality of the soul, you say, became a received opinion, which had probably its rise so early as the Babylonish captivity, the sect of the Sadducees continually persisted in denying future rewards and punishments.”

Morgan the deist, had already asserted that the Sadducees were only the remains of the ancient Jews, and that their only fault was persisting, according to the opinion of their fathers, to reject the new doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of a future state, which the Babylonians taught, and the Jews had learned from them during the captivity. If you

*sine pecuniâ In diem convectarum turba renascitur, largè frequentantibus, quos vitâ secessos ad mores eorum fortunæ fluctus agitât. Ita incredibile dictu, gens æterna est, in quâ nemo nascitur. Tam fecunda illis aliorum vitæ penitentia est! Edit.*

(1) *Rewards and punishments.* “Divines,” says Mr. Voltaire, “have not yet determined as an article of faith, whether hell is in the centre of the earth, as it was supposed to be in the pagan theology. Some (an Englishman,) have placed it in the sun,” &c. On this we will observe *en passant*, that we wonder that so well informed a christian as Mr. Voltaire could think that the divines of his religion determine articles of faith. *Edit.*



do not openly embrace this critick's opinion here, as you do in other places, yet we can easily see that by these words, the *sect of the Sadducees continually persisted, &c.* you would give us to understand that this sect arose long before the captivity of Babylon. But does the antiquity of the Sadducees, and of their opinions, appear to you to be an argument, why they should not have been tolerated? It seems to us to prove the contrary.

You add, that *the Sadducees differed much more from the other Jews, than Protestants do from Papists.* We think it would be hard to prove this, especially according to your principles. As far as we can understand, essential points, and fundamental articles, divide Protestants from Papists; and what makes a still stronger impression on the generality of men, and contributes more powerfully to make these divisions eternal, different rites, which are connected with their belief, separate them. But nothing of this kind distinguished the Sadducees from the Pharisees and the other Jews. They prayed in the same temple, they observed the same rites, and followed the same customs. They believed, as the others did, in one God, his providence, his avenging justice, &c. &c.

It is true, that they did not admit future rewards and punishments. But do not forget, *that it is certain and incontestible, that Moses did not, in any place, promise the Jews future rewards and punishments. That the great Arnaud says it plainly and strongly, in his apology for (1) Port-Royal, and that the learned bishop of Gloucester has proved it clearly in his divine legation of Moses (2).* At least you should not forget what you yourself have said, and so often repeated; that *Moses does not say one word that can have the slightest relation to the punishments (3) of a future state.*

(1) See Treatise of Toleration, article of the extreme toleration of the Jews. *Aut.*

(2) *Legation of Moses.* See Philosoph. Diction. Art Religion. *Aut.*

(3) *Of a future state.* See Philosoph. Diction. article Hell. *Aut.*



*That the belief of spirits, and of the immortality of the soul, were points unknown to the ancient Jews. That these doctrines came from the Egyptians, the Babylonians and Persians, and that they formed no part of (1) the Jewish religion.*

“The Sadducees, you say, remained in communion with their brethren; high-priests too were chosen out of this sect.” What is there surprising in this, according to your principles? If the opinions which the Sadducees disavowed were *new*, if there is *not a word* said of them in the law, *if these opinions did not in any wise constitute the Jewish religion*, they therefore were not essential points of their faith. *The Sadducees therefore, did not differ from the other Jews, more than Papists do from Protestants.* And they might without being highly tolerated, remain in communion with their brethren, and have high-priests chosen out of their sect.

How oddly you reason, sir! You want to shew that the Jews were tolerant, because they tolerated the Sadducees, and you continually tell us, that the opinions which these latter rejected, *did not constitute the Jewish religion.* You would have us be surprised at seeing high-priests chosen out of their sect, and you repeat this continually, *that the high-priest at that time obtained his preferment sword in hand, and made his way to the sanctuary over the dead bodies (2) of his competitors.* Does violence infer right and consent?

As for us, sir, we believe and can prove, that the Sadducees and their opinions were of late date, that their sect, so far from being prior to the Babylonish captivity, did not arise 'till about three hundred years after it, under the pontificate of Onias, that Antigonus and Sadoc were the founders of it, and that this latter gave it its name. That the Sadducees being misled by ill-understood principles of

(1) *Of the Jewish Religion.* See Philosophy of History.

(2) *Of his competitors.* See Philosophy of History, article of the Jews since Paul. *Aut.*



spiritual and pure love, committed great errors and denied certain truths, the belief of which is useful and salutary to men, and which have been handed down to us by respectable traditions, that go as far back as the origin of the nation.

But if you ask us how they remained in communion with their brethren, altho' they held these errors, and how it happened that some of them were high-priests, we shall answer,

1st, That as there is one sort of toleration which proceeds from consent and approbation, there is also another flowing from caution and necessity. And that as we never had nor could have the former, it is not so surprizing as you think, that we had the latter.

2dly, That these materialists were more reasonable and less dangerous, than those of our times. They respected at least the leading principles of the established religion. There are two barriers which stop corruption among men, the punishments of this life, and those of the next ; now altho' they had leveled one of these, yet they took care to preserve the other. And the fear of punishment here below, and the expectation of those blessings, which according to them, God always bestows on his faithful servants, were strong curbs to the passions of men.

3dly, That there was a time when the Sadducees were too powerful not to be tolerated. That when they became afterwards fewer in number, and less united, they carefully concealed their opinions. That as they did not differ at all in outward appearance from the other Jews, and were satisfied if they could seduce the rich and powerful, whom they freed from the yoke of traditions, they never held forth in the coffee-houses of Jerusalem, and never attacked received opinions in scandalous writings, or if they did, they knew how to publish them under the borrowed names of Phenicians and Arabians. That for these reasons, it might have been hard to convict them legally.



4thly, That as we were a dependant nation on the kings of Syria, and afterwards on the Romans, we had not always the power of electing, or, rejecting an high-priest.

5thly, (Weigh this reason chiefly, sir,) That the following rights which are both civil and religious, of going to the temple, of offering up sacrifices, of rising to sacerdotal and pontifical honours, could not be taken from them but by an exprefs law, especially in those times of dependance; and that altho' the truths which they denied, were always believed thro' our nation, and plainly implied in the books of the law, yet they are not in any part of it clearly laid down, and the belief of them was no where exprefsly commanded under pain of being cast off from the body of the people; that therefore, it cannot appear extraordinary, that these sectaries should have been tolerated for a time.

§ 4. *Whether those sects tolerated one another?*

But did those sects which, especially according to your principles, ought to have tolerated one another, really do so? You believe it, sir, and assert it, but all our records unanimously contradict it.

As soon as the two principal sects arose, disputes and divisions broke out. Both parties in their turn, courted the favour of princes, in order to make use of their authority to crush their adversaries. Hircan, gained over by the Sadducees, persecutes the Pharisees without mercy; he imprisons some of them, puts others to death, forces the greatest part of them to take refuge in deserts, and makes it capital to follow their institutions. Aristobulus, the son of Hircan, inherits his fathers hatred for them, and carries on a fierce war against them. And Alexander, the brother of Aristobulus, persecutes them even unto death. The widow of Alexander changes sides by his advice, and immediately the Pharisees having got the upper hand in this new reign, persecute the Sadducees in their turn, and repay evil for evil. Sadduceism then becomes so odious, that its followers



are forced to yield. They give up state affairs, or dare no longer vote in councils and trials, but according to the will of their adversaries. In short, these sectaries, sometimes oppressed, and sometimes oppressors, cease not to persecute each other with the utmost fury, and these animosities are perpetuated even until the total ruin of the nation, which they accelerated. "This multiplicity of sects, says a learned Protestant, was one of the principal causes of the misfortunes of Judea. That hatred which length of time and sufferings, must have allayed, still subsisted; even war did not unite men, and they chose rather to be destroyed by their divisions, than to save their country by unanimously opposing the enemy."

Thus, sir, those sects tolerated each other. Do you propose this example to modern nations? And is it upon this conduct, that you ground those encomiums of the highest toleration, which you give to our fathers? You must allow, that there is as little justice in your praise, as in your censure, for you condemn the law which was wise, altho' severe, and you praise the practices of the people, which were not wise at all.

#### C O N C L U S I O N.

Well, sir, do you still think that the examples which you produce in favour of toleration, are very proper to recommend it to your rulers? In order to make them adopt it, you give them ancient nations for models, the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, &c. And these nations, so tolerant according to you, were according to yourself so intolerant, that the philosophers and the initiated, were every where under the necessity of concealing their opinions and tenets *with the greatest circumspection*. And the tolerant Egyptians, thro' a principle of religious intolerance, carried on bloody wars against each other. And the Greeks who, according to you, *never persecuted any one but Socrates*, banished, proscribed, imprisoned, put to death, those who in their conversation or writ-



ings, attacked the established worship, or strove to introduce a new one. And the Romans, who according to you, *never persecuted any one, and adopted any gods*, forbade worshipping strange gods, demolished their temples, scattered their worshippers, scourged philosophers, drove the Jews into exile, and shed rivers of christian blood, &c.

From these nations you pass to the Jews. But what facts do you produce? Facts doubtful or untrue, or presented under false aspects, or foreign to the question, which either prove nothing, or make against yourself. Facts which happened in times of confusion and anarchy, and dependance, and which were so far from having had any consequences favourable to the nation, that they hastened its ruin. Can these truly be called proofs? And would not one be apt to think, that instead of inviting the rulers to the exercise of toleration, your intention is to make them dread it?

Pray, sir, leave the nations of antiquity at rest. Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, &c. They all held intolerant principles, they all, either thro' fanaticism, or political views, were sometimes intolerant.

But above all things meddle not with the Jews, or learn their history better. Both your (1) countrymen and (2) strangers, have several times charged you with having but a superficial knowledge of it. Learn it better, sir, or never speak of it.

We have said it, and must now repeat it at the close. We are scarcely tolerated in most countries, and have no design in this work, to attack toleration. We only meant to shew you, that you have given bad proofs of it in your two chapters. Have we not kept our word? Be yourself the Judge.

We remain, &c. &c.

(1) *Your countrymen.* See *Defense des Livres de l'ancien Testament. Refutation de quelques articles du Dictionnaire Philosophique. Supplement a la Philosophie de l'histoire, &c. Edit.*

(2) *Strangers.* See Warburton, and lately the authors of the *Monthly Review*, those learned men, in the place quoted by the Portuguese Jew, letter 4<sup>th</sup>. and elsewhere. *Edit.*



## LETTER. VII.

*In which the question is discussed, whether it was impossible that so many women, and so much cattle, could be found in the country of the Madianites, as the author of the book of Numbers mentions.*

WE have just read, sir, that part of your Treatise on Toleration, in which you speak of the victory, which our fathers gained over the Madianites.

You say, “that the victors found in the camp of the vanquished, six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, seventy-two thousand bullocks, sixty-one thousand asses, and thirty-two thousand girls.”

You add a note to this text in which you say, “Madian was not comprized in the land of promise. It is a small skirt of Idumæa, in Arabia Petræa, it begins towards the north, at the torrent of Arnon, and ends at the torrent of Zared, in the midst of the rocks, and upon the eastern shore of the lake of Asphaltis. This country is now inhabited by a small clan of Arabians. It may contain eight leagues in length, and somewhat less in breadth.”

This opposition between so great a number of girls and cattle, and the small extent which you give to this country, is probably brought in with some view. You meant, it is likely, to ridicule this story, and consequently the book which contains it. There is another writer too, who thinks as you do, (1) or is perhaps the same with you, who has the same aim. He assures us, that *many people doubt of this fact*, and a third bolder than the rest, declares that he thinks it (2) *quite absurd*. (3) As you repeat this difficulty

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(1) *Or is perhaps the same with you.* It is Mr. Voltaire himself, in his *Philosophy of History*. *Edit.*

(2) *Quite absurd.* See *Evangile de la Raison*. *Aut.*

(3) *As you repeat this difficulty so often, &c.* It is extraordinary that writers



so often, and with so much confidence, it is probable that you think it extremely embarrassing. Let us look into it, and see whether this account is so incredible and absurd as you think it.

§ 1. *Whether the author of the book of Numbers has asserted that the Israelites found all these women and cattle in the camp of the Madianites.*

Let us be sure first, for one should always begin by this with people of your stamp, that the author of the book of Numbers really asserts what you say.

Where did our Hebrews find these girls and cattle, the number of which astonishes you? *In the camp of the Madianites*, you answer. Thirty-two thousand girls, seventy-two thousand oxen, sixty-one thousand asses *in a camp*! We must allow that such a thing is very improbable. When men are going to attack a formidable enemy, they do not generally drag after them such a cumbersome train.

But as you proposed to criticise this recital, you should at least have read it with some care. Is it said in it that these thirty-two thousand girls, and all this cattle were found *in a camp*? No, sir, (1) we see on the contrary, the victorious Hebrews spreading themselves thro' the country, carrying off women, cattle, &c. &c. and after returning to the legislator, and taking an account of their spoils, they find them to amount to the articles mentioned by the sacred writers. Thus these women and cattle were not taken *out of the camp* of the Madianites, but out of the whole country around. Therefore the truly absurd circumstance of *finding them in the camp*, must not be imputed to Moses who does not assert it, but to the criticks who make him say it. They imagined it, they wrote it, and coolly deliver it to their readers. Therefore the ridicule of it must fall on them and them only.

who set up for learning, should persist obstinately in so frivolous an objection. The author whom we answer here, has repeated it four or five times for his part. He might I think have been more sparing of his paper, and more tender of his readers. *Occidit crambæ repetita.* Edit.

(1) *We see on the contrary, &c.* See Number, ch. 31. Aut.



Another of those writers thinks proper, to place these women and cattle *in a village*. Thus these critics agree, one says *a camp*, the other, *a village*. But pray gentlemen leave them where Moses put them. We see that you are straining hard for a joke. But these jokes, which are founded in error, do not become a philosopher.

§ 2. *Whether it is impossible that there should have been found thirty-two thousand girls in a country, eight leagues long and not quite so broad.*

Well, you will say, we give up the point. These thirty-two thousand girls were found *neither in the village nor the camp*, and to own the truth, Moses never asserted these absurdities which we ascribed to him, merely to amuse our readers. But still is it not an absurdity to say, that so many girls could be found in a country eight leagues long, and not quite so broad?

I shall grant for a moment that your survey is just, and that the country of Madian had the extent you say. Would it be impossible, even according to this hypothesis, that thirty-two thousand girls should have been found in it? If this number seems incredible, it must be doubtless, because it supposes too many inhabitants for so small a country. Let us then form a calculation.

Thirty-two thousand girls, suppose about the same number of boys. There would have been then sixty-four thousand young persons of both sexes, (1) which must be reckoned from the birth, to the age of matrimony. These young persons, according to the common computation, must have amounted to at least (2) half the nation. If therefore we compute the

(1) *Which must be reckoned, &c.* The Hebrew text is clear with regard to this, and the vulgate says expressly, *Puellas autem et omnes feminas virgines reservate vobis.* See Book of Numbers, ch. 31. *Aut.*

(2) *Half the nation.* In the former edition the supposition was one third; but according to the common estimation, it amounts to at least half. Therefore too great a concession was given to the learned critick. Generosity is laudable, but truth must not be violated. The author of the Defence of the Books of the Old Testament follows the computation here given. It is the more probable, with regard to those distant periods, because the obstacles which now prevent the fruitfulness of marriages were then unknown. *Idem.*



number of the nation, according to the young people amongst them, we need only multiply sixty-four thousand by two, which gives (1) the sum total of one hundred and twenty-eight thousand persons. Do you think, sir, that a country eight leagues long, and of nearly the same breadth, cannot support one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants?

A country of this extent must contain about two hundred and forty-eight thousand acres of land, and an acre of good ground can maintain four persons; even if we limit it (2) to three, forty-three thousand acres, would have been more than sufficient to maintain the one hundred and twenty eight thousand Madianites. Let us add, if you please, fifteen thousand acres, as we may suppose that the lands of Madian did not yield crops annually, and that it was necessary to leave the third part of them fallow every year. We shall then have in all, but fifty-eight thousand acres employed in the support of the inha-

(1) *The sum total of, &c.* It is remarkable that Moses sent, to conquer the Madianites with their whole country, but twelve thousand men. Had the enemy been twice as strong, (which is not clear,) it would not follow that there were one hundred and twenty-eight thousand inhabitants in the country, reckoning with Mr. Voltaire, a soldier for every five persons. If then we were to judge of the Madianites according to this view, we have rather increased than diminished their number. *Aut.*

(2) *To three.* It was probably, according to this estimate, that in many distributions of land, made not only under the kings of Rome, but four hundred years after its foundation, every citizen or planter got but two acres of ground; it was supposed that such pieces were sufficient to support them and their families, and the planters must have thought so too, or they would not have accepted them to go and starve far from home. See Dionisius Halicarnassensis, Livy, &c. And Collumella informs us, that four acres of land made up the whole estate of the famous dictator Quintius Cincinnatus. Would it be unreasonable to suppose that the dictator's family, his wife, children, slaves, amounted to twelve persons, and to allow six for the families of those planters whom we mentioned? It was an established custom in these distributions of land, to give the preference to fathers of families who had many children. *Aut.*

The translator of these letters must observe, that the French word *arpent* (which is often used in this calculation, and cannot be rendered by any single word in our language,) is a measure of land containing one hundred perches square of eighteen feet each. He has been obliged to use the word *acre*, altho' *acre* in French is equal to *un arpent & demi*, a measure of land, containing forty perches in length, and four in breadth. However it is not to be doubted, but the calculation in the translation will answer as well as in the original, notwithstanding these small variations.



bitants. Is it inconceivable, that out of two hundred and forty-eight thousand acres, there should be found fifty-eight thousand of common fertility? Therefore, thirty-two thousand girls do not necessarily imply, that there were too many inhabitants for a country of this extent.

To these proofs by calculation, let us add examples. *Such a number of inhabitants, you say, in so small a country.* But do you forget, or pretend to (1) deny the population of Egypt, which is still more astonishing in proportion, and yet attested by so many writers? The immense population of Judea, even under the Asmonean kings, and under the Herods, which is acknowledged even by heathen writers? That of Greece, and particularly of Attica, a country of small extent, dry, mountainous, stony, and yet very populous? And lastly, that of Rome, under Servius, that is at a period, when the Roman state, which did not extend to more than eight leagues in length or breadth, supported even then, more than (2) two hundred thousand souls? Will you plead the falsity of all those facts, and in order to invalidate one instance in sacred, will you deny so many other facts in profane history? How many provinces are there even now in China, England, Flanders, &c. of the same dimensions, which support more than one hundred and twenty-eight thousand inhabitants.

You say yourself, sir, that *it is an undoubted fact, that the Roman state until the year 400 of its foundation, extended only eight leagues in length or breadth.* Do you think that this country had not then one

(1) *To deny.* He does really deny it. But notwithstanding, the numerous and vast caves cut in mountains, those subterraneous aqueducts which passed thro' them, to convey the fertilizing waters of the river, those canals, the immense lakes, dug by men, so many mighty monuments that still subsist, and even the ruins with which Egypt is covered, from the sea to the cataracts, evidently prove a population, if not so great as the ancients represent, yet far above those little ideas which this author has formed to himself, and which he wishes to instil into his readers. *Edit.*

(2) *Two hundred thousand souls.* The number must have been greater according to the account taken in this king's reign. See Livy, &c. *Edit.*



hundred and twenty-eight thousand inhabitants? If we recollect the several numberings of the people, the armies that were raised, the nations that were conquered, the new tribes that were added to the old ones, &c. from the reign of Servius, until the era of which you speak, we shall be convinced that this country, eight leagues in length and breadth, contained many more inhabitants than we suppose were in the country of the Madianites. And you cannot say, that the lands about Rome, were much more fruitful than that of the Madianites, for you assert, that *the land about Rome was always barren*. One hundred and twenty-eight thousand persons, and more, may therefore live in a country eight leagues in length and breadth, allowing the ground to be of common goodness. This is an acknowledgement which you cannot retract, without contradicting yourself.

§ 3. *Whether it is incredible that the cattle which the author of the book of Numbers enumerates, could subsist in the country of the Madianites.*

But you will say, sir, could a country extending eight leagues in length and breadth, support with so many inhabitants, such a quantity of cattle as is mentioned in the book of Numbers.

We shall not look far back or far distant, for instances, to shew that an equal or perhaps less space of ground, may support such a quantity of cattle. England alone, will supply us with many such examples. Let us produce a few out of an author of reputation. Sir John Nichols, a writer very well versed in rural œconomy, informs us, that Dorsetshire supports, besides other cattle, above five hundred thousand sheep in a space of four leagues in diameter. He speaks of another place too, of smaller extent, and marshy ground, where may be found from four to five hundred thousand sheep. And lastly, he informs us that in the neighbourhood of Dorchester, he reckoned six hundred thousand in the space of two leagues. Is not this number grea-



ter in proportion, than six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, seventy-two thousand oxen, &c. supported in a country eight leagues square? We think that your own country might supply you with many such instances, and if they are uncommon, we could readily tell you the reason of it.

However it be, such of your countrymen as have wrote on agriculture, lay down principles which are equally favourable to our way of thinking. They tell us, that an acre of land can support three oxen. Therefore twenty-four thousand acres, would suffice for seventy-two thousand oxen, and ten thousand one hundred and seventy acres, for seventy-one thousand asses, even supposing that an ass eats half as much as an ox. According to the same writers, an acre of land, can support twelve sheep, therefore, fifty-eight thousand two hundred and fifty acres, would suffice for six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep. Put these sums together and you will find, that ninety thousand four hundred and twenty acres, would be sufficient for the whole stock of cattle. And if you add to this the fifty-eight thousand acres which were reserved for the support of the inhabitants, you will perceive that the sum of one hundred and forty-eight thousand four hundred and twenty acres only, was employed for the maintenance of all together. Now we ask you, sir, was it impossible that out of two hundred and forty-eight thousand acres, of which the country of the Madjanites consisted, there should be one hundred and forty-eight thousand four hundred and twenty which were fit for pasture or tillage? And may we not fairly conclude from this, that it is no way incredible that this country supported so many men and cattle as Moses says, and that his account cannot appear absurd to any, except those who are unacquainted with the resources of ancient or modern agriculture?

These calculations are confirmed by an unanswerable example, especially to you, it is that of your



Romans, in the year 400 of the foundation of Rome, as numerous as the Madianites, and holding the same quantity of land, they certainly had flocks. As they were both good farmers and brave soldiers, they probably had great flocks of sheep. You cannot suppose that they sent them to graze with their neighbours. Eight leagues square sufficed then for them and their cattle. And why could not an equal quantity, be sufficient for the Madianites and their cattle?

§ 4. *Advantages which have not been taken in the foregoing calculations.*

You see, sir, that we do not at all exaggerate. We are very far from having availed ourselves of every advantage in the foregoing calculations.

1st, Out of the two hundred and forty-eight thousand acres, of which the country of the Madianites consists, we have applied only one hundred and forty-eight thousand four hundred and twenty for the food of man and beasts. We leave therefore about one hundred thousand unapplied. Perhaps we might in case of need, have allotted some thousands of acres more, which might have supplied at least some kind of pasturage.

2dly, We may estimate, according to the *author des recherches sur la population de l'Auvergne & du Lyonnais, &c.* the annual consumption of each person upon an average, to twenty four bushels of corn. Therefore four times this quantity, was sufficient to maintain four Madianites, especially if we add to it, the milk and flesh of their great flocks. They lived in an hot climate too, which inclines men to sobriety, and makes them keep more frugal tables, which in ancient times was the custom. Now, if we suppose, that every acre yielded ninety-six bushels of corn, this certainly is not allowing it an uncommon degree of fertility. If you lived nearer your capital, you might observe a greater



fertility (1) in the environs of it. And yet, we have confined our calculation, to three persons to the acre.

Add to this, that the same grounds which serve for the support of man, may supply cattle with pasturage and fodder.

3dly, We have estimated the feeding of an ass, to be equal to half of that of an ox. But (2) one of your most celebrated writers, in the eloquent encomium he gives to the ass, judiciously observes, that one of the excellent qualities of this useful quadruped, is his frugality. He says the ass is easily supported, and that the driest herbs, and most despised by other animals, are sufficient for his subsistence. Therefore, this article of the feeding sixty-one thousand asses, which you would have us look upon as an object of importance, might be rated very low. Here are already three articles on which we might gain many thousand acres, without offending probability.

4thly, We might have observed besides, that in this great number of cattle, of which Moses speaks, there is no mention of horses, animals which are more useful for the race, or the battle, than for the labours of husbandry, which consume much, and are

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(1) *In the environs of it.* We have certain information, that in the neighbourhood of Paris, in that district called, *la France*, the acre produces, communibus annis, one hundred and twenty, or one hundred and forty bushels of corn. This seems to be the calculation of the learned Abbé Fleury, in his treatise of the manners of the Israelites. He lays it down as a principle, that an acre of good ground can support two persons, who would consume each seventy-two bushels of corn annually, or five pounds and an half of bread *per diem*. He says, he is experimentally certain of this by the enquiries he has made, probably in this very district, where he had a country-house. This learned writer in one of his calculations, with regard to the population of the land of promise, allows each Israelite five pounds and an half of bread *per diem*. This is certainly too much, and the reason he gives for it is not at all satisfactory. In many states of Europe, the soldier's allowance is a pound and an half of bread, this perhaps is too little. The computation we make of two pounds of bread per man, comprehending in this number, children, women, the old and the sick, is probably a sufficiency, and beyond it.

*Edit.*  
(2) *One of your most celebrated writers &c.* Mr. de Buffon in his Natural History of the king's cabinet. *A certain Abbé whom they call Pluche, I believe has made the same observation.* We think this excellent author deserves to be treated more politely by Mr. de Voltaire. *Edit.*



not used (1) for food. But the cattle which the Madianites possessed was not of this kind. The asses do not serve for food, and are easily supported, and if the oxen consume more than they do, yet they serve for food.

5thly, We may add another observation. That if the Madianites had wanted land for pasturage, they were in the neighbourhood of the wilderness, to which they might have sent at least a part of their flocks to feed. For these wilds, say what you will, sir, were not altogether so barren, as not to have some spots or districts, in which cattle might feed. We see this in the scripture, and modern travellers confirm it.

6thly, We have supposed, that one third of the arable land in the country of Madian, rested yearly. But what tracts of land do we actually know in England, Flanders, &c. which rarely or never get rest? How many lands in hot countries, yield corn and vegetables under the shade of fruit-trees and vines, and after having perhaps more than once yielded a crop, are forthwith sowed again for the following year? We see various instances of such fertility, not only in Italy, but in some of your provinces, at the bottom of mountains, and in valleys. Are you certain, sir, that the lands of the Madianites, were not naturally of sufficient fertility and cultivation, to yield the same produce as these, and that all their arable grounds required rest as yours do.

In short, sir, in those times, and especially (2) in small states, the present causes of the barrenness of many countries, did not yet exist. The debasing practice of slavery, enormous duties, arbitrary taxation, &c. all those scourges of agriculture and po-

(1) *For food.* One of your best writers on agriculture and population, says somewhere, *take away one horse, and you put two men more in a country.* *Idem.*

(2) *In small states.* It is remarkable that Egypt, Greece, ancient and modern Italy, were never more populous or more fruitful than when they were divided into small states. *Idem.*



population were unknown. Nor were (1) those great landholders known, who absorb every place around them and leave it waste, nor their luxury, which is still more hurtful than their waste. Nor were those immense buildings to be seen, which steal away the earth from cultivation, nor those gardens, and extensive parks, where utility is generally sacrificed to pleasure. None of those receptacles for birds of prey, a destructive race, none of those ridiculous (2) game laws out of a barbarous code, those odious remains of a savage government, yet carefully handed down to us. A publick profession of idleness, was not deemed a respectable profession, and men did not yet know, that to do nothing was the way to honour God, and to live in a princely manner. (3) Every man was a husbandman. The arts of luxury, then little known, did not engross a part of the inhabitants, who are now employed in superfluous, but esteemed callings. Agriculture was the prime art, as it was the most useful one.

These causes, sir, may make, and have often made a small country capable of maintaining a great number of inhabitants. How profitable is an acre of land, when the cultivator labours under no discouragements, and knows how to take out of it all that it can yield. *Laudato ingentia rura, exiguum colito*, says the bard of Roman agriculture. This is a true maxim, of which you do not seem to feel the whole force.

§ 5. *Nature of the Madianite soil. The author's objections are answered.*

You assert, sir, that the country of the Madianites in no wise resembles those of which we have been speaking. *It is, you say, a barren tract.*

(1) *Those great landholders, &c.* Some writers on agriculture, say that by multiplying landholders the produce of land is increased. They talk of great landholders and even extensive farmers, as the scourges of population. *Edit.*

(2) *Game-laws.* It is easy to see that those German Jews have no landed property. *Idem.*

(3) *Every man was a husbandman.* It is probable that the Madianites were both merchants and husbandmen. We see in Genesis, that the merchants of



But can you tell the cause of this barrenness? Whether it proceeds from the nature of the soil, or from other causes political or moral? From the tyranny of petty princes, and the oppressions of the Pachas? From the laziness of the inhabitants, or from the weakness of government, which dares not protect them (1) against, the incursions of their neighbours? In a word, can you determine whether the barrenness of this country, proceeds from its want of cultivation, or whether it is not cultivated because it is by nature barren?

*It is now inhabited by a small clan of Arabians only.* Therefore it was never better peopled. A fine consequence indeed! How many other countries are there, especially under the Turkish yoke, which were formerly very populous, and are now almost entirely depopulated. Even without going so far, just view the country about Rome; see what it is now, and recollect what it once was.

*It is a mountainous country.* But do you not know that in this part of the world, the mountains supply (2) the best pastures, and even now in Palestine and the environs, they are preferred to the vallies for feeding cattle. Do you think, sir, that the mountains of Madian containing eight leagues square, were all covered with naked rocks? If you have any proofs of this, produce them, for in short we are not obliged always to credit you on your word.

this nation went to traffick in Egypt, and that they were carrying thither gums of Gilead and spices, when Joseph was sold to them by his brethren.  
*Edit.*

(1) *Against the incursions.* To all these causes, modern travellers ascribe the present barrenness and depopulation of Palestine, and of all the neighbouring countries. See Shaw, &c. *Aut.*

(2) *The best pastures.* Shaw speaks thus of the mountains of Palestine. "There are places on them covered with that kind of short sweet grass, which cattle prefer to any other, which renders their milk more delicious, and their flesh more juicy. So far were these mountains in the time of the Israelites, from being uninhabitable and barren, or the refuse of the country, that in the division which was made of them, mount Hebron was given to Caleb as a singular favour." These mountains probably resemble those of Steyning in England, the heights of Brighthelmstone, and the rising plains of Salisbury. You may travel many miles thro' them without meeting any houses, or trees, or streams, but the short grass which grows on them, makes them excellent pasturage. Each of them feeds from three to five thousand sheep. See a Tour thro' Great-Britain. *Aut.*



Even suppose that this country is at present barren ground, covered with burning rocks, what conclusion could you draw from this? How can you know with any degree of certainty, whether these rocks which are now naked and barren, were not then covered with good soil, which the storms, rains and torrents may insensibly have washed away, and strowed again with gravel and sand? These revolutions, which in order to make your reasonings just, should be deemed impossible, are not uncommon. The least smattering of history or geography could supply you with many instances of them.

The author of the book of Numbers, whoever he be, must have known this country. He lived near it, and he wrote for a people whose lands bordered on it. Can we suppose him unskilful enough to have placed such a number of men and cattle in a country covered only with naked rocks and burning sands? Especially as he might, according to your system at least, have placed the scene of this event, which he certainly did not mean to render incredible, in another place? And what other like ignorance could induce the author of the book of Judges, to represent the inhabitants of so poor a country, as being so rich in cattle and in gold? What shall we say of the historian Josephus? He surely was acquainted with the country of Madian. And yet he makes no scruple to represent it as a fruitful country, and its inhabitants as an opulent people. And other writers give the same character of it. This country was not therefore in the beginning, such as you wish to make it at present. And we may suppose it to have been better without any improbability.

§ 6. *Of the extent of the country of the Madianites. That the critick could not flatter himself with*

This passage of Shaw, which we have inserted, may serve as a comment on a verse of the psalms, which Mr. Voltaire translates so basely, *mountains of God, fat mountains; why do you look on the fat mountains?* This is acting as Perault did, who translated some parts of Homer very ill, and then found them unworthy of so great a poet. Was Perault a fit model for Mr. Voltaire?



*having an exact knowledge of it. That he agrees ill with himself in this respect and plainly contradicts himself.*

Thus, sir, without any exaggeration in our calculations, and even laying aside some advantages, which we might have availed ourselves of, we have shewn you that such a people as thirty-two thousand girls imply, and such a quantity of cattle as the book of Numbers mentions, might live in a country about eight leagues square, of middling fertility. And you can give no proof, that the country of the Madianites, was naturally so bad as you make it; and still less, that it was so in those ancient times. We might then rest here, and this would be sufficient to shew, that the absurdity which you seem to perceive in Moses's account, is imaginary. But we will go a step farther. We will give your objection a precise answer, and which requires neither hypotheses, nor calculations.

Even were all our calculations false; even if the country of the Madianites had not that moderate fertility which we have ascribed to part of it, still it would be your province to prove, that it extended no farther than you are pleased to allow. Without this, your objection is ill-founded, and your jokes fall back upon yourself. Now, sir, what proofs have you of this?

*This country, you say, is bounded on the north by Arnon, on the south by Zared, on the west by the lake Asphaltis.* We grant it. But do you know how far it extended to the east, and whether it did not extend south, beyond the source of Zared? It bordered on the country of Moab, or rather it lay within the bounds of it, so that these two nations have been often confounded together. Do you know exactly the bounds which divided them, and the particular point where the wilderness began, to which the Madianites were neighbours? The scripture determines nothing with respect to any of these things. The most able critics, and learned geographers speak of



them doubtfully. Where then are your proofs, and where have you borrowed these confident assertions?

We could, on the contrary, quote many learned men who had better opportunities of knowing this country than you, and who give it a much greater extent than you do; Josephus, (1) Eusebius, Jerom, &c. But let us lay aside these authorities which you seem to despise. Let us confine ourselves to one which cannot fail of being important at least in your eyes; this is your own authority, sir.

Altho' you allow the country of Madian here, but *eight leagues in length, and a little less in breadth*, yet in another place, you give it *eight leagues square* without any restriction, and in another place about (2) *nine leagues every way*. We have here an addition already of a league square, which amounts to three thousand eight hundred and seventy acres. But this is not all.

(3) In your Philosophy of History, you break out in abuse against Moses, because *after having had benefits heaped on him, and received signal favours from the high priest of Madian, who had given him his daughter in marriage, and granted him his son for a guide in the wilderness, he was most shockingly ungrateful, in devoting the Madianites to destruction*. It seems then that you believe that the devoted Madianites, and the people of Jethro were the same nation, otherwise your reproaches would be but vain declamation, and your reasoning as false as your imagination is misplaced. Now this high-priest and his Madianites, lived far from the lake Asphaltis, in a place near the red sea, called the gulf of Elath, or the Elanitick gulf, at least fifty leagues from Zared. Could the country of Madian, sir, have fifty leagues in length, and have

(1) *Eusebius Jerom, &c.* These two writers lived near the country of Madian. They had studied on the spot the geography of the scripture, and have left treatises on the subject. *Aut.*

(2) *About nine leagues every way.* See *Philos. of History, Art. Human Victims.* *Aut.*

(3) *In your Philosophy of History, &c.* See *ibidem.* The same reproach is repeated in the same work, *Art. Moses*, and in many new tracts. *Edit.*



but eight or nine? It seems to us that these two assertions are incompatible. You may chuse the alternative. Either the complaint you make of Moses in the Philosophy of History is false, or what you advance in the Treatise of Toleration, concerning the extent of the country of the Madianites is not true. Chuse, sir, by which of these two works you wish to stand. For you cannot stand by both, or rather it is very probable, that you are mistaken in both.

§ 7. *What may be reasonably supposed of the Madianites and their country. What is most surprizing in the account which the author gives of the victory, which was gained over them by our fathers.*

Let us speak according to truth, sir, or at least probability. These Madianites, which in order to make your argument good in your Philosophy of History, ought to be but one, were probably two very distinct nations. They had not the same descent, habitations or worship. Those of Jethro descended (1) from Madian, the son of Chus; the others (2) from Abraham, by Madian son of this patriarch and of Cethura. These latter worshipped (3) Baal-peor or Belphegor, as the Moabites their neighbours did. The former seemed to have preserved, until the time of Moses, some knowledge, and perhaps even (4) the worship of the true God. The people of Jethro lived, as we have observed, on the border of the Elanitic gulf (5) Madian, their capital, was to the east of this gulf, and their country extended to the western coast, and according to some writers, to mount Sinai. On the contrary, those whom our fathers conquered, lived near the

(1) *From Madian the son of Chus.* For this reason, Sephora the Madianite, the wife of Moses, is called a Chusite, Numbers, ch. 12. And Habakkuk makes Madianites and Chusites synonymous. *Aut.*

(2) *From Abraham by Madian.* See Genesis, ch. 25. *Idem.*

(3) *Worshipped Baal-peor, &c.* See Numbers, ch. 31. *Idem.*

(4) *Worship of the true God.* Jethro offers sacrifices to the God of Israel, Exodus, ch. 28. *Aut.*

(5) *Madian their capital.* It is to this day called Madian. *Idem.*



dead sea. (1) Their chief city was built upon Arnon, pretty near the capital of the Moabites. They were rich in gold and flocks. Their country, which even according to the extent you give it, sufficed for such a nation as thirty-two thousand girls imply, and for the cattle which Moses enumerates, probably contained yet more than these; for it is scarcely possible that every thing was carried off or destroyed by the conquerors. It is probable part escaped, but 'tis very likely too that this country was not confined to the dimensions you give it, of eight leagues square. Its lying within the borders of Moab, its proximity to the wilderness, the silence of Moses, but more especially yours on its bounds, towards the east, authorize us to give it more extent.

If, therefore, there is any thing ridiculous or surprizing in your account of the victory gained over the Madianites by our fathers, it is not that we see Moses putting so many girls and cattle in a country, of which he does not point out the limits. It is our seeing a philosophical historian, and learned writer, so often and so confidently repeating an objection so flimsy in itself, and which is besides supported by such weak proof. It is our seeing him determining the extent of a country, without knowing its exact bounds, and in order to render a respectable author absurd and odious, he is plainly and blindly contradicting himself. This, sir, will surprize and offend some readers. As for us these rambles will not astonish us. We know that the greatest men are still men. Let them have what knowledge they will, let them pretend to what impartiality they please, they must in some shape, pay a tribute to humanity.

We remain, &c.

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(1) *Their chief city, &c.* It was called Madian too, there remained some ruins of it in the time of St. Jerom. *Aut.*



## LETTER VIII.

*Of the Jewish Prophets. The objections of the illustrious writer answered.*

**Y**OU censure our prophets, sir, not only in the text of your treatise on toleration, but in a long note. And many other parts of your writings have this for their object. Sometimes, whilst you profess that you are very far from confounding the Jewish prophets with the impostors of other nations, you endeavour to put them both on the same footing. Sometimes whilst you seem to plead their cause, you turn their words and actions into ridicule. And in order to give a fabulous air to every thing that is related of these holy men, you represent their times, as times of incredible prodigies. This is a subject of importance. Let us try whether we can answer your objections.

§ 1. *First objection. Impossibility of knowing future events.*

You first lay down a principle, which if it was true, would certainly make impostors and cheats of all those who have claimed the title of prophets in every nation. This principle is, the *impossibility of knowing future events*, and by consequence of foretelling them.

It must be allowed that you demonstrate this principle but lamely. You say, that *it is evident that we cannot know future events, because we cannot know what is not*. What kind of evidence or proof is this, sir.

God, who knows every thing, knows futurity. You yourself probably know past events. Now futurity is not yet come, the past is gone, it has ceased



to be, therefore we may know (1) *what is not*. We think this reasoning a little more clear than yours, sir.

§ 2 *Second objection. Prophecies reduced to the calculation of chances.*

If it is impossible to know future events, what shall we think of all our prophecies? You are going to inform us, sir.

*All predictions you say, are reducible to the calculation of chances.* All predictions, sir. This is easily said.

But by what calculation of chances, I pray you, could one of our prophets foretel, that the altar on which Jeroboam sacrificed in Bethel, would be overturned, three hundred and sixty-one years after, by Josias? And how could Elias foretel that the race of Achab should be cut off, and not a stem remain, and that Jezabel, then on the throne, *should be eaten by dogs, in the field of Jezreel*? Isaiah announces Cyrus to the Jews as their deliverer, more than two hundred years before his birth. Jeremiah foretels, the almost incredible restoration of Jerusalem, and the return of the Jews into their native country, after seventy years captivity. Daniel describes the destruction of the Persian empire, by Alexander, and all the evils which one of his successors was to inflict on the Jewish nation, &c. Can you think sincerely, that in order to foretel with certainty, these so distant and improbable events, nothing more was necessary but the *calculation of chances*? Surely something more was necessary. You must be sensible of this.

§ 3. *Third objection. Prophets among other nations.*

But, you say, the Jews are not the only people who boast of having prophets, *many nations, the*

(1) *What is not.* See Philosophy of History, Article Oracles.  
Aut.



*Greeks, the Egyptians, &c. had also their oracles, their prophets, their nabim, their seers.*

Yes, sir, but does it follow, that because other nations had false prophets, therefore the Jews had no true ones? We think that counterfeit coin is not an evidence that sterling money never existed. It rather proves the contrary.

2dly, Could you shew in any one of those nations a body of prophecies so clear, so precise, so wisely written as ours? Could you vindicate their authority, and shew the accomplishment of them as we do?

3dly, Why are the pretended prophecies of other nations fallen into oblivion? Why were they despised even by those persons to whom they promised such prosperity and conquests? Why have ours been preserved for so many ages, and revered at this day, not only by the Jews, but by the most enlightened people of the universe? Is it not because the former have been convicted of falsehood, absurdity, and imposition, and that the truth of the latter has been demonstrated by an incontestible chain of events, which all the prudence of man could not foresee.

§ 4. *Fourth objection. Jewish prophets accused of having had the same motives, and made use of the same means with the false prophets of other nations.*

You protest, sir, as we observed before, *that you do not mean to confound the Nabim and the Roheim of the Hebrews, with the impostors of other nations.* You assure us of this. We must believe you, and the manner in which you speak of our prophets, in several places, is a convincing proof of it.

But even if this was your intent, sir, do you think that it would be easy for you to succeed in it? Alas, what relation can there be between the sublime doctrine, the pure morality, the noble generosity of the former, and the ambition, avarice, and



blind fanaticism of the latter? Do you see the Jewish prophets announcing to their people absurd and barbarous divinities? Prescribing impure rites? Requiring (1) innocent blood? And ordering unfortunate children to be sacrificed by those very persons who gave them birth?

You say, *it is easy to conceive that a man might procure wealth and popularity by taking up the profession of a prophet, and that he might succeed by the (2) ambiguity of his answers.* Such indeed were the motives, and such the means, by which deceiving prophets used to gain authority to their impostures. But had our prophets such motives? Most of these holy men reap nothing according to you from their labours, but the hatred of kings, and the contempt of nations, persecution, exile, death, and the event did not disappoint their expectations.

Nor was *the ambiguity of answer* their resource. Most of their prophecies gave no room for equivocation. Not only the events, but the circumstances of them, the times, the places, even the names of the actors are inserted in them. And the philosopher Prophecy, found the prophecies of Daniel, in particular so exact, that he thought the only way to evade the consequences of them, was to say, that they were written after the event. If therefore among so many clear predictions, and so exactly verified, some obscure ones are found, the obscurity of them cannot be considered as the veil of subterfuge.

And yet you accuse our prophets of this. And, what we could never have imagined, you quote

(1) *Innocent blood.* Many examples may be given of this in profane authors of antiquity; every one has read the following verses.

Sanguine placatis ventos &c. virgine cæse . . .  
Sanguine quærendi reditu. *Æneid.* II. *Aut.*

(2) *Ambiguity of his answers.* See Philosophy of History. *Aut.*



as a proof of this, the answer of Elisha, to the traitor Hazael. This perfidious man, had formed a resolution of assassinating his sovereign, the king of Damascus, and came from that prince, who was then sick, to consult the prophet whether he should recover. "*Elisha,*" you say, "*answered that the king might recover, but that he would die.*" If Elisha had not been a prophet of the true God, he might have been suspected of providing himself with an evasion in any case, for if the king had not died, Elisha had foretold his recovery, by saying that he might recover, and had not pointed out the time of his death." This might indeed be suspected, if we were to form a judgment of the answer, by the manner in which you relate it. But whoever will take the trouble of consulting the text, will be very far from harbouring any such suspicion.

Elisha there says to Hazael, *go say unto him thou mayest certainly recover*, that is to say, his distemper is not mortal; *but*, adds he, fixing his eyes on the traitor, *the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die*, that is, that you yourself will take away his life. In this sense Hazael understood it, and feeling by this answer, and the stedfast look of the prophet, that he had read his heart, *he was ashamed*, says the text. Thus Elisha provided himself with an evasion!

When you formed this objection, and quoted as a proof the answer of Elisha, had you before you, the fourth book of kings? We suppose you had not. Otherwise, instead of suspecting the sincerity of the prophet, we might with reason have doubted yours?

However if this is your best proof, that our prophets used artifice, by this one we may judge of the rest.

§ 5. *Fifth objection. False prophets among the Jews. Pretended difficulty of distinguishing them from true ones.*



But, you add, *there arose among the Hebrews false prophets without mission, who believed that they had (1) the spirit of God.*

There did *arise* such, sir, and the Hebrews could not be surprized at it. Moses himself had forewarned them of it.

These false prophets boasted that they had the spirit of God. But did they *believe* they had it? We think that you would find it hard to prove this.

In this mixture of true and false prophets, you say, how shall they be distinguished? *They called one another visionaries and liars. There was therefore no other way of distinguishing truth, but to wait the accomplishment of the prophecies.*

Yes, and by this rule, the true prophets requested to be tried. By this, they wished to be distinguished from impostors, who spoke in the name of the Lord, and whom the Lord had not sent. *The prophet which prophesieth peace, says Jeremiah, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that (2) the Lord hath truly sent him. Where are, adds he, those prophets who assured thee that Nabuchodonozor should not return? O king, answered Micah to the impious Achab, who had condemned him to remain in prison, on bread and water, O king, if you return in peace, nations hearken unto me, it is not the Lord who hath sent me.* Is this the language of deceit? And how many of their prophecies might be produced which have been verified by the event, under the eyes of those very persons to whom they were made.

§ 6. *Sixth objection. Ill usage given to the prophets.*

This is the subject, sir, of an article in your Philosophical Dictionary, an article of which you have boasted no doubt, as a perfect model of the finest

(1) *The spirit of God.* See Philosophy of History. Article, Prophets. *Aut.*

(2) *The Lord hath truly sent him.* See Jeremiah, ch 28. and 38. *Aut.*



raillery, and most ingenious ridicule. Let us see whether you will have reason to glory in it long.

*The Jewish prophets have been persecuted.* Yes, sir, and these holy men had foreseen it. They expected this reward of their labours, and zeal for their religion and their country, whose fate was connected with their religion. For this reason we generally see them taking this painful and weighty office on them very reluctantly, and accepting it at last merely in obedience to the repeated orders of heaven. But as soon as *the burthen of the word is laid on them*, they boldly issue forth before princes and people. They upbraid them for their idolatry and their crimes, and then neither exile, nor chains, nor dungeons, can silence their noble indignation.

*This was, you say, a bad trade.* Certainly it was so, if those *trades* are accounted the best, which bring in most profit, and are the surest steps to power, wealth and ease. But do you allow no other trades to be good but these? What think you then of the trade of Socrates and Regulus, and of so many virtuous Greeks and Romans, who with a view to instruct or serve their fellow-citizens, and to save their country, sacrificed fortune, ease, even life, and moved boldly through the midst of abuse and persecution, to that post to which honour and duty called them? It is indeed *a bad trade* in the eyes of the vain selfish philosophers of this age, who judge of every thing by their private interest, and set no value on any thing but what helps the present hour of life. Can you bend your spirit so low as this, sir? And does the virtuous man, who struggles against adversity, and for the sake of justice, braves abuse, torments and death, appear to you a despicable fanatick, and a poor butt of ridicule? How narrow are the views of modern philosophy, how mean its feelings, and how misplaced its jests!

How was it possible, sir, that you did not, first, perceive that such great sufferings, endured with so



much fortitude, are an indisputable proof, that these holy men were fully convinced of the divinity of their commission? For would these men, or rather this long uninterrupted succession of wise, learned, and virtuous men, have endured, for the sake of imposture, evils which they foresaw, and could not help foreseeing? And secondly, that this cruel treatment was so far from bringing contempt upon them, that their generous and unshaken perseverance in hardships, added to the elegance of their taste, their exalted sentiments, their zeal, their virtues, must compel us to insert them in the catalogue of those ancients, who best deserve our admiration and respect.

One of your sacred writers passed this judgment upon them, when considering these men of God *wandering in deserts, and in mountains, and in caves of the earth, stoned, sawn asunder, slain with the sword,* he said they were men, *of whom the world was not worthy!* Which, sir, of you or him, entertained the most just and noble opinion?

§ 7. *Seventh objection. Nature was different then from what it is now.*

Another difficulty. “Nothing should be matter of astonishment in the Jewish prophets. Their ages were such as have not been seen since. *Even nature was not then what it is (1) now.*”

We know that the customs and manners of those ancient times were different from ours. We can easily give credit to this. But that nature itself should not have been the same then, that it is now, requires proofs. Can you produce good ones?

*Magicians, you say, had then powers over nature, which they have not now, they enchanted serpents. Those possessed of devils, were cured by the root called Barad, which was set in a ring and put under their noses.*

I i

(1) See Treatise of Toleration. *Aus.*



1st, What, sir, in the times of our prophets, and of the ancient Jews, in those times which preceded the captivity, and *in which devils were not known, magicians* were to be found, and those *possessed* of devils were cured. Shall we always have contradictions?

2dly, You did not find this prescription for curing possessed persons in the prophets, or the scriptures. Do not confound these sources, with those out of which you have drawn.

3dly, If you look upon these operations as supernatural, you cannot then conclude, that *nature was not then what it is now*. The supernatural power of these operations proves nothing for or against nature.

But if you look upon them as natural. If you think that those possessed with devils, were only affected by some distemper, we can shew that nature, in this respect has lost nothing of its power. Simples, at this time, cure distempers. The Americans charm serpents, and the race of the Ppylles (1) still subsists in Africa. Some of these are found in Egypt too, who daily handle the most venomous vipers and serpents (2) without fear or hurt. Nature is therefore now what it was formerly.

(1) *Still subsists in Africa.* The Ppylles were ancient families, or clans of Africa, famous for the art of charming serpents. Many of them were seen in ancient Rome, giving proofs of their abilities in this respect.

(2) *Without fear or hurt.* See the voyages of Hasselquist. "A female Ppylle, says this ingenious naturalist, brought to me at Cairo four kinds of serpents, the *cerastes*, the *jaculus*, the sea serpent, and the shop-viper. This woman gave me a great fright as well as to Mr. de Lironcourt, the French consul, and to many others of that nation who were present, she threw those reptiles full of life at our feet, and let them run freely about us, in order to shew us with what resolution she could handle those dreadful animals without receiving the least harm from them. When she put them into the jugs in which they were kept, she took them with her naked hands, as women take their laces. They were all easily put in except the vipers, who found means of getting out before she had stopped them up, and crept up along her hands and naked arms without giving her the least fright. She took them quietly off of her body, and put them back into the place which was intended for their grave. We were assured that she had gathered those reptiles about the country with the same ease.

"It cannot be doubted but that this woman had some secret for preserving herself from their bites, but we could not possibly derive any information from her on this subject. The art of charming serpents is a secret among the



*But the gift of prophecy was then common, and it is no longer so.* It is true the gift of prophecy is no longer common, but does it follow from this that it never existed? And does the uncommonness of this supernatural gift, prove that nature is not the same now that it was formerly.

*Such metamorphoses were seen as that of Nabuchodonozor changed into an ox, the wife of Lot, into a statue of salt, five cities into bituminous lakes.*

Probably you call these events very poetically, *metamorphoses*, in order to form a similitude between our scriptures and *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. However, no matter for the name, let us consider the facts.

*Five cities metamorphosed into bituminous lakes.* Yes, sir, but such events are not confined to the times of the scripture merely, and may be found in other places besides *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Asia, Africa, Sicily, Italy, &c. might supply you with recent instances of this. Thunder, earthquakes, vulcanos, have

Egyptians. All naturalists and travellers should endeavour to find out something certain and decisive, with respect to an object so worthy of their curiosity. What is very extraordinary, is, that this secret should have remained undiscovered for more than two thousand years, whilst so many others have transpired. It is known only to certain persons, who transmit it to their descendants and their families. All that has transpired of it yet, is, that those who charm serpents and vipers, do not touch any other venomous reptiles, scorpions, lizards, &c. And the families which charm these latter, dare not touch the former. That those who charm serpents and vipers, frequently feed upon them among one another when they take them, and that they go afterwards and ask the blessing of their cheick, priest or chief, who, amongst many other superstitions, spits several times on them." These superstitions, and others as vain, are probably more ancient than is supposed, and perhaps gave rise to the laws of Moses against these enchantments.

In a note in the bottom of the passage we have just quoted, Mr. Linnæus assures us. "that Mr. Jacquin, who then lived in the West-Indies, wrote, to him, that the Indians charm serpents with *aristolochia anguiceda*, and that the late Mr. Forskohl, during his travels in the east, informed him, that the Egyptians used for the same purpose a species of *aristolochia*, but that he did not tell which." *Edit.*

Mr. R. of the congregation of St. Lazarus, a man of probity and knowledge, attests that he knew a person at Befancon as bold and as clever as the Psylles, that he has seen him often handling vipers without fear, thrusting in his naked arms and taking out handfulls of them. That when he returned from this kind of hunt, he used to send these vipers to the sick whom he knew. That he kept some of them in a chest, where he fed them, walking thro' the midst of them without dread. That when he had too many of them, he dressed and eat them in the way of a fricassée of chickens. Mr. R. assures us, that he tasted this ragout and found it good. *Christ.*



too often changed, or if you like the word better, metamorphosed even in these latter times, men into ashes, lakes, into mountains, cities into lakes, &c. &c.

The same may be said of the pretended *metamorphosis* of Lot's wife *into a statue of salt*. This event is not so extraordinary, as to oblige us to have recourse to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in order to find out others similar to it. This foolish woman turns her head towards Sodom in flames, to behold this dreadful spectacle, and that instant a vortex of sulphurous, arsenical, bituminous vapours, loaded with metallick, nitrous and other salts, surrounds and suffocates her. Her body impregnated with and penetrated by these substances, remains without motion or life, (1) like a statue. There is nothing in this but what might happen, and has happened more than once in earthquakes, and in the neighbourhood of vulcanos. Witness the relation of Heidegger, who says that whilst some peasants were milking cows, an earthquake was suddenly felt, which caused so malignant and piercing a vapour to issue forth out of the earth, that they and their cows remained lifeless like so many statues.

We cannot speak in the same manner of the *change of Nabuchodonoxer into an ox*. This, indeed, would be a real metamorphosis, and worthy of Ovid, as it much resembles those which he relates. We must allow that nature no longer works any such changes. But where did you find this one, sir? Indeed it is said in scripture, that this prince lost his reason, that

(1) *Like a statue*. The text says, *becomes a column or pillar of salt*. The lake Asphaltis was very salt. It was called for this reason, the *sea of salt*, or very salt sea, *mare salis*, *mare salissimum*. But the Hebrew word *salt*, does not signify merely common salt, it is applied to natron, to bitumen, to various stones of a vulcano. The words *statue or pillar of salt*, may therefore be rendered by statue or pillar of *bitumen* or of those bituminous stones, covered with salt, which are found near this lake. The scripture says, *to become stone*, for *to become like a stone*. The heart of Nabal, it says, *became stone*, that is, cold, and motionless like a stone. If Mr. Voltaire believes, or feigns to believe, that Lot's wife was really changed into a statue of table-salt, and that this statue still exists, he falls too readily for so great a man into popular errors; or else he has too little respect for his readers. *Edm.*



he was driven from his palace, that he wandered for many years through the country, that he was exposed to the dews of heaven, and lived as oxen on grass, but the scripture does not say in any place, that he was metamorphosed into an ox. On the contrary, the scripture observes that *the hair of his body became like eagles feathers, and that his nails lengthened like those of birds.* Therefore this pretended metamorphosis of the king into an ox, was operated only in your poetical brains. Your fruitful and lively imagination, made you see certain relations between Nabuchodonozor and an ox, to which the scripture was a stranger, and which you alone could perceive.

Seriously, sir, does this proceed from inadvertence or mirth? Perhaps you meant to joke. Could you not chuse fitter subjects, and can you jest no other way, than by burlesquing these respectable writings?

*The race of giants, you say, has disappeared. Ezekiel speaks of pigmies. Gammadin, a cubit high, who fought at the siege of Tyre, and in most of these things, sacred and profane writers agree.*

*There have been races of giants.* This is a fact attested not only by poets and mythologists, but by the naturalists, travellers, and historians of antiquity. Therefore in this point *sacred and profane writers agree.*

But is it true *that these races of men have disappeared*? Is it not on the contrary very probable, that there are still giants on earth, that is, races of men of an extraordinary size? We think, sir, that this point can no longer admit of any doubt. Magellan and Pegaforte saw such near the streights, in 1519, and gave them the name of Patagonians, which they still retain. The accounts of these two travellers have been since confirmed by the successive testimony of a crowd of other navigators, (1) worthy of

(1) *Worthy of faith.* See the dissertation on America, by Dr. Pernety these navigators are mentioned in it. *Ant.*



faith. And very lately (1) commodore Byron, and Messrs. (2) Guyot, and la Girandais, have given new proofs of it. Probably then *giants* do still exist, and nature has not changed in this respect. Some ancient travellers, but especially the poets, speak also of pygmies. They were, according to them, you know, *little men, a cubit*, that is, one foot and an half high, who made war against the Cranes.

Undoubtedly, sir, men a foot and an half high, armed with arrows, and ranged in battle array, on the towers and the ramparts, would have been a very extraordinary garrison for a city. But is it certain, sir, that Ezekiel put such a garrison in the city of Tyre?

It is true, your vulgate version mentions amongst the troops which defended the city, the pygmies or pygmeans, but we cannot recollect that it says anywhere that these pygmeans were but a foot and an half high.

And even if your vulgate version did speak of real pygmies, the text does not mention them, and the text is the thing in question.

The Hebrew text calls the defenders of *Tyre, Gamadim*, as you well observe. According to some interpreters, this was the name of a people who lived near Tyre; others were led from the root of the

(1) *Commodore Byron*, "As soon as we came on shore, says the Commodore, the savages gathered about us, amounting to about two hundred, looking upon us with astonishment, and smiling at the disproportion between our stature and theirs. They are so tall, that when they were sitting, they were almost as high as the commodore standing, and he is six feet high, &c. (Ibidem.) *Aut.*"

(2) *Guyot & la Girandais*, "When in 1766 they landed in the bay of Boucaut, at the east of the streights of Magellan, they did not know that captain Byron had seen there the year before, men of a gigantick stature. They perceive men on horseback, who make signs to them to draw near, they come near them, and find them of extraordinary size every way. They brought to Paris the dresses and arms of some of these colossusses which they presented to Mr. Darboulin farmer general of the posts, at whose house they may be seen." (Ibid.) *Aut.*

We read in the same dissertation, that at Chili, men are so vigorous in old age, that they beget Children at ninety, and that some female savages have had children at eighty. Nature then is the same that it was in the times of the prophets, and even in the time of Abraham. *Edit.*



word, to think that it signifies here, *hardy men*, warriors full of vigour and courage.

Therefore it is not Ezekiel, but you, who place men a foot and an half high on the ramparts of Tyre. When we see you giving this city such defenders, although we cannot admire the critick, yet we discover the poet.

However, sir, by bringing down poetical exaggerations to their just value, we do believe with Aristotle, that a people of Troglodytes lived near the Astoboras and the Nile, of *a size* inferior to the common, who hunted cranes and lived on such fowl. These were the Laplanders of Africa.

Behold, sir, how you have proved that *nature was not in the time of the prophets, what it is now*. Judge yourself of the solidity of your proofs.

We remain, &c. &c.



## LETTER. IX.

*The criticks other objections to the Jewish prophets, answered.*

**W**E have not in our former letter, fir, exhausted all your difficulties with respect to the prophets. Some of them still remain to be examined. You draw these latter ones from the typical language which these holy men used, and from some expressions, in which you think they indulged themselves rather too freely.

These objections are not new, fir. Tindall has already borrowed them from some writers, who borrowed them also; and you can only claim the honour of proposing them with art whilst you seem to endeavour to answer them, a stratagem which Bayle has taught you.

Such as they are, however, they must be answered. And we think this may be done satisfactorily.

§ 1. *Typical language, its power; it was used among many nations.*

Whether it was that men had not at first a sufficient variety of terms to express (1) their sentiments and ideas, or that it was found necessary to stir up the imagination of savage nations by sensible objects, in order to persuade them, it was usual for men in ancient times, to express themselves on certain occasions by extraordinary actions, which represented their meaning, in a forcible manner.

The powers of this sort of language were certainly great. It shewed the object instead of describing

(1) *Their sentiments and ideas.* The learned bishop of Gloster ascribes to this cause, the rise of typical language, and indeed it is probable, that it was the first and chief cause of it, Mr. Voltaire, for what reason we know not, wishes rather to look for the rise of it in the custom of writing in hieroglyphicks. But surely men must have spoken by signs and types, before they wrote in hieroglyphicks. *Edit.*



it. And as it spoke to the most (1) lively of the senses, it could not fail of awakening the attention of the most indifferent or heedless. In vain did Jeremiah threaten Jerusalem with impending ruin, his voice was scarcely heard. But when he brought the chiefs of the city out of the gate, and broke the potters vessel before them, saying, *thus saith the Lord, thus will I destroy Jerusalem*, the whole city was moved. A Levite sends to each of the tribes, one of the bloody limbs of his abused wife. By what words could he cry out for vengeance more powerfully?

This language was known by all ancient nations, but was chiefly used in the east, and as our prophets conformed to the taste of the country, and the manners of the age, they used it often in their predictions.

When, with a view to ridicule it, you confine it *to the times of the old world which was very different from the new*; you make a mistake, sir; we could produce you instances of it in later periods, and even in the most polite era of Greece. Thus Fارقين spoke to the messenger from his son. The ambassador of the Scythians to Darius. Alexander to his favourite, &c. &c. And without mentioning here America, where this language has been found again, at this day many nations in the east preserve it. If you had not *so much business*, and could spare time to read over the oriental writers, or the travellers who have gone through these countries, you would find that many of those ancient customs, which appear to you to have belonged to the *old world*, are still found there. Does it follow that this language is ridiculous, because it is not common in your country? Will you always judge of every thing by your own customs?

K k

(1) *Most lively of the senses.* 'Tis the thought of Horace.

Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus. *Edit.*



§ 2. *Allegories and parables used by our prophets.*

To this language of actions and types, the orientals added another, that of allegories and parables. They brought them into discourse and as travellers inform us, still bring them in such a manner, that if one was not apprized of this custom, it would be easy to make mistakes, and to take figures for facts and parables for (1) real actions. We think, sir, that you have often made this mistake in your reasoning on the prophets. You have often confounded real actions, visions and parables. We shall proceed to distinguish what you have confounded.

§ 3. *Jeremiah bearing yokes.*

You think, sir, that our prophets have carried typical language to an astonishing height. These discourses, you say, these enigmatical actions, scare weak minds that are not sufficiently acquainted with antiquity. You are probably better acquainted with it than they are, and it is only with a view of instructing them, that you relate some of the typical actions of our prophets in your own way.

You begin with Jeremiah. You represent him to us bound with cords, a pack saddle, with collars, and yokes on his back. We can find in scripture that Jeremiah loaded himself with chains, and we will allow that he put collars on his back; but we cannot see in any part of it, that he bore a pack saddle. He put on yokes to shew, that Nebuchodonozor was going to put Judea and the neighbouring provinces under the yoke; but what could induce him, sir, to wear a pack saddle? A pack saddle and a yoke are different things. Do you confound one with the other? Or is it to raise a laugh, that in spite of truth and sense, you represent Jeremiah thus saddled? This in-

(1) *Real actions.* Thus it is a doubt among Christians, whether the beggar Lazarus and the Samaritan, are parables or true histories. *Edit.*



deed is an ingenious and elegant vein of humour!

However, sir, if Jeremiah, *by tying himself with cords and putting yokes on his back, only conformed to received custom*, as you assert, how could these typical actions which were conformable to custom appear strange or ridiculous?

§ 4. *Isaiah walks naked.*

But, you say, “Men saw Isaiah walking stark naked in Jerusalem, in order to shew, that the king of Assyria would bring a crowd of captives out of Egypt and Etheopia, who would not have any thing to cover their nakedness. Is it possible, that a man could walk stark naked thro’ Jerusalem without being punished by the civil power? Yes certainly. Diogenes was not the only man in old times, who had this impudence. Strabo speaks of a sect of Brachmans, who would have been ashamed to wear garments, and at this day in the Indies, we see penitents walking naked, &c.”

These facts, doubtless, sir, are curious, and your thus bringing together Isaiah, Diogenes and the Brachmans, is an admirable instance of that love of truth which inflames you. But where did you read, sir, that Isaiah walked *stark naked* in Jerusalem? No, he did not walk *stark naked*, he walked without his robe or his tunick, as slaves do, to whom they always give cloathing sufficient to cover their nakedness.

The Hebrew word which you translate *stark naked*, signifies here, and in many other places, no more than *stripped of his upper garments*. For this reason the text observes, that *Isaiah walked without shoes, and with naked feet*, which would have been a superfluous observation if the first term had signified *stark naked*.



Besides, the Greek, Latin, and even the French word, which answers to the Hebrew, does not always signify stripped of all garments.

When Virgil says to the husbandmen, *nudus ara* (1) *sere nudus*, did he mean that they ought to be stark naked? And when you say of a poor man, that he is *naked*, quite *naked*, does this necessarily imply, that he has not cloathing to cover his nakedness.

You may still go on in amazement, that Isaiah walked *stark naked* in Jerusalem, and that he was not *punished by the civil power*. Compare him again with the Grecian Cynic, the Brachmans and the Santons. As if Diogenes and the Brachmans wanted to prefigure the state of slavery. These madmen had a different motive, and this motive, which was not that of the prophet, required absolute nakedness.

Isaiah therefore walking *stark naked* in your writings, could only make the most ignorant readers laugh. This is all the profit that can be reaped from such raillery. Is it your aim, sir, to make fools laugh by bantering them?

Tindal asserted likewise, that David had danced *stark naked* before the ark, and you would willingly make us believe this too. But Leland answers, that David was so far from having danced *stark naked*, that the scriptures says expressly he was *cloathed with his ephod*, or the linen robe, which was a sacerdotal vestment. Therefore when it says that he danced *naked* before the ark, it only means, that he had thrown off the garments he usually wore, and all the marks of his dignity, a sense of which we could give many instances even in

(1) *Sere nudus*. When Virgil published his *Georgicks*, a critick who was reading the beginning of this verse, *nudus ara, sere nudus*, concluded it by these words, *habebis frigora, febres—plough naked, sown naked*, says Virgil; 'tis the way to get a fever, answers the critick. Would not one think that our philosophers have taken this poor joke for a pattern. *Edit.*



profane writers, and not that he danced *stark naked*.

These pitiful objections and cold jests, which our *philosophers* hand down from one to another, will at least give us just grounds for suspecting their erudition or their sincerity.

§ 5. *Of Hosea.*

The prophet Hosea astonishes you still more.  
 “ God, you say, commands him to take a woman of whoredoms, and to have children of whoredoms. He afterwards orders the prophet to lie with an adulterous woman. These orders give scandal. *God could not order a prophet to be a debauchee and an adulterer.*”

No certainly. But can you prove that *God commanded his prophet to be a debauchee*? He orders him to *take a woman*. Therefore the order is marriage, not *fornication*. Suppose the woman was a prostitute before her marriage, is it not probable, that Hosea when he married her, restored her to virtue, and that their children being the issue of lawful marriage, were called children of fornication, merely with relation to the former excesses of their mother? What proofs, sir, have you of the contrary? Therefore, even according to this supposition, Hosea in executing the commands of the prophet, would not have been a *debauchee*.

But is it very certain, that a prostitute is meant here? There are strong reasons, sir, for doubting it. “ When an infidel,” says (1) a learned christian lately to Dr. Kennicott, “ wants to prove that God not only permits but commands things, which are contrary to his law, he confidently opposes this verse of Hosea, and already glorying in his victory, he rises on this text a trophy to impiety and infidelity. But the true Hebrean is not

(1) *A learned christian.* The Abbé de—Ex-professor of Hebrew. This explanation is also found in the *Principes discutez* of the learned father Capuchins of Paris. *Aut.*



“ moved either with these shouts of victory, or with  
 “ the severity of his adversary.

“ He examines the text attentively, and he reads  
 “ in it literally, that the Lord says to Hosea, *go*  
 “ *take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of*  
 “ *whoredoms, for the land hath committed great whore-*  
 “ *dom in departing from the Lord.* First, then, he  
 “ recollects, that the prophets scarcely use any other  
 “ terms than those of *whoredom* and *adultery*, to  
 “ signify idolatry.

“ He then fixes his attention on these words, *be-*  
 “ *cause the earth hath done shamefully*, and thus he  
 “ reasons. Did God command his prophet to mar-  
 “ ry a prostitute? I can scarcely believe it. Good  
 “ sense and reason dictate to me, that children born  
 “ in lawful wedlock cannot be *children of whoredoms*.  
 “ Therefore this epithet of infamy, cannot fall either  
 “ on the mother or the children. On whom then  
 “ will it fall? On the land which broke the Lord's  
 “ covenant, by prostituting itself to idols. Now  
 “ if it be the land which prostitutes itself, as the  
 “ prophet himself says, this woman whom he is  
 “ going to marry by God's command, is not a pro-  
 “stitute, but a *woman out of the land of prostitutions*,  
 “ and her children will for the same reason, be chil-  
 “dren born in the land of prostitutions, that is of  
 “ idolatry. In fact the kingdom of Israel had been for  
 “ near two centuries plunged in the most monstrous  
 “ idolatry. In order to take the people out of it,  
 “ God had for a long time threatened them severe-  
 “ ly. At last he sends forth Hosea as his servant,  
 “ go, says he, take a wife in this land of idolatry.  
 “ The prophet obeys him. He marries; he has  
 “ children, and God himself names them, he calls  
 “ one of them, *I will no more have mercy*, the other,  
 “ *Ye are not my people*. This was God's intent, to  
 “ keep perpetually in the sight of this ungrateful na-  
 “ tion, children whose names should be a proof, a  
 “ memorial, a continual and living monument of  
 “ his indignation, and of the calamities he was go-



“ ing to inflict on them. This was the meaning of  
“ the marriage which he ordered the prophet to con-  
“ tract, and it was not needful for this end that he  
“ should marry a prostitute.”

What think you of this explanation, sir? Is it not a natural one, and the proofs of it very clear? Therefore it is not certain that this *wife of whoredoms*, whom Hosea was commanded to marry, was a *prostitute*; and as we shewed above, altho' she had been one before her marriage, Hosea might have married her without being a fornicator and a *debauchee*.

We shall say the same thing of the adulterous woman. Explain the text of Hosea as literally as you please, you can never prove that God commanded the prophet to commit any crime with her, which the law forbade and even made capital. But what would you think if we were to add with many learned interpreters and ingenious criticks, that these orders were perhaps never given by God, nor executed by the prophet. That probably they were nothing but rhetorical figures, *parables conformable to the style and usages of the ancient times*? This has been the opinion among the Jews, of the Chaldean paraphrast, Aben Ezra, Maimonides, &c. And among Christians, of St. Jerom, Witfius, Stillingfleet, &c. And, to tell the truth, altho' we adopt the literal interpretation, yet the reasons which they give are by no means contemptible.

If, instead of representing the actions of Hosea as criminal, you had been satisfied with saying, that they were not very decent in a prophet of the Lord, you would have had a little better shew of reason. But we could have answered, that decorums are not every where the same. That they vary according to the notions and manners of ages and nations. That the people of the east were not then, nor are they now, so nice about marriage as the Europeans. That these actions of the prophet, who was known to speak in the name of the Lord, and to obey his orders, had nothing in them shameful or degrading,



altho' they might appear extraordinary, which was necessary in order to rouse the minds, and awaken the attention of men.

§ 6. *Of Ezekiel. Allegories and visions of this prophet.*

The idolatrous cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, are represented by Ezekiel under the figure of two prostitutes. You pretend to fear least these natural paintings of the prophet, may offend *weak minds*. You undertake to justify them. But it is not 'till after you have shewn them in all their *nakedness*, that you make, a little of the latest, a judicious reflection.

*Those expressions*, you say, *which appear loose to us, were not so then. Some words which are not indecent in Hebrew, would be so in our language.* Therefore the greatest caution should be used in rendering certain expressions out of our language into yours. Judge of yourself, sir, on your own principles.

In order to prove that *our decorums, are not similar to those of other nations*, you add, "Those expressions of Ezekiel, which seem extraordinary to us, did not appear so to the Jews. It is true that the synagogue, in the time of St. Jerom, did not permit the reading of this prophet before the age of thirty; but it was because he says, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father, in which he plainly contradicted Moses." This passage of the *Philosophical Dictionary*, brings to our minds another in the *Treatise on Toleration*. You say in it; "Notwithstanding the plain contradiction between Ezekiel and Moses, the prophet's book was received into the canon of inspired writings. It is true, that the synagogue forbade the use of it before the age of thirty years, but the cause of this prohibition was, least young men should make an ill use of the loose descriptions that are in it."

Observe, sir, how your two texts agree with one another. In one of them, the reading of Ezekiel was not forbidden, because he plainly contradicts



Moses, but *least young men should make an ill use of the loose descriptions that are in it.* In the other, the prohibition was not on account of those expressions which appear too free to us, although not so to the Jews, but *because Ezekiel contradicted Moses.*

No, sir, Ezekiel does not contradict Moses. We have proved it ; but certainly one of your texts contradicts the other.

We may add, that the synagogue was certainly right, in prohibiting the reading of this prophet before thirty. Some expressions which might have been decent in the time of Ezekiel, became perhaps too free when the prohibition was given. Instances of these revolutions are seen in all languages. Is it in order to contradict the synagogue, or to edify young people of both sexes in France, that a celebrated French writer has translated so *freely* those *too free* expressions of Ezekiel ? In plain sincerity, sir, which conduct, that of the synagogue or of the writer is most rational ?

Let us say a word of the visions of this prophet. Whether thro' inattention, or to amuse your readers, you sometimes take those visions for realities.

“ Ezekiel,” you say, “ devours the parchment volume, which is presented to him. He remains lying on his left side three hundred and ninety days, and on his right side forty days, in order to point out the years of the captivity. He loads himself with chains, which prefigures those of the people. He covers his bread with excraments, &c. &c.

Let us examine these assertions distinctly. *Ezekiel devours the parchment volume.* No, sir, Ezekiel did no such thing, and this volume was not really presented to him, but only in a vision. If you had been more attentive, you might have observed, that the chapter of Ezekiel, out of which this passage is taken, begins by these words, *vision of the glory of God.* And when I looked, says the prophet, *behold a hand was sent unto me, and lo ! a roll of a book was*



therein. Lo! I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. Then did I eat it, and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

Do you think, sir, that St. John really eat the book of which he speaks in the Revelations? This passage explains the other. What, sir, does a learned Christian like you, take allegories and visions literally? I suppose you are only aiming at a joke!

*He remains lying on his left side, &c.* The remainder of this passage of Ezekiel, sir, is a further proof, that all this passed in a vision, and not in real life. *Then the spirit entered into me, says he, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, go shut thyself within thy house. But thou, O son of man, behold they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb. Lie thou also upon thy left side three hundred and ninety days. Lie again on thy right side forty days. And behold I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, 'till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.* The Spirit, you see, enters into the prophet. The Spirit speaks to him, and binds him in order to keep him on the same side. Does not all this imply a vision rather than real life?

*He covers his bread with excrements.* This action which is connected by the subsequent narration, with what goes before, passes also in the vision. There cannot be the least doubt of it.

However, this expression of *covering his bread with excrements*, signifies no more than *baking his bread under dried excrements* set on fire. The custom of making use of the dung of animals, such as oxen, camels, &c. for this purpose, was common in the poor countries of the east; and modern travellers inform us, that it still subsists among the Arabians (1) who

(1) *Who live near the Euphrates.* Something like this is practised in France, in Brittany, and other provinces. The dung of animals is gathered together



live near the Euphrates, and in other places too. A quantity of their unleavened dough is spread upon a stone. This is covered with the dung of cattle which is set on fire, and the bread is soon baked under these ashes. To this custom Ezekiel alludes, and by this he shews the indigence to which the Jews were to be reduced.

When a man recalls to mind these customs, fir, what must he think of the filthy jests of certain writers, and among others yours, fir. Let me present you some of them.

The Lord, (1) you say, *ordered him to eat for three hundred and ninety days barley-bread, made also of beans and millet, covered with human excrements, the prophet cried out pouah! pouah! pouah! my soul was never before polluted. And the Lord answered him, Well I will allow you the dung of oxen instead of human excrements, and with this dung you shall bake your bread. As it is not usual to spread such sweet-meats on one's bread, &c. &c.* Thus, fir, instead of saying that the bread was baked under lighted dung, you assert, that the bread was made of dung! This truly is philosophical sincerity! And you cover the bread with these *comfits*! Here is wit indeed! Refined and elegant raillery.

*Mirror & item indignor*, Yes, fir, we respect you too much, we have too high an opinion of you, not to be surprized at seeing you debate yourself by such flat and low buffoonery; *mirror*! What, is it the great writer Voltaire, a man of such delicate feelings and so refined a taste, who thus defiles and dishonours his compositions! It gives us pain to suppose it. *Indignor*!

But if filthiness and flatness offend, falsehood is still more shocking. Here, fir, the respect and ef-

and dried before the sun, by placing it against the walls of houses, and it is used for heating ovens and dressing meat, where firing is wanting. *Edit.*

The translator adds, that in many places of Ireland, where firing is scarce, such expedients are used for baking bread and dressing meat.

(1) See Philosophy of History, and Philosoph. Dictionary. Article Ecclesi.



teem we have for you, raises a doubt in our minds which you alone can solve. When you represented Ezekiel, literally *eating turd for his breakfast*, it is not our part to blush at it, and when by the most distinguished raillery, you spread such *sweetmeats* on his bread, if in this case you were ignorant of the sense of the text, and of the custom to which it alludes, what a poor critick are you! If on the other hand you were not ignorant, what dishonesty in your proceeding! And if, in order to make fools laugh, you have merrily, and on purpose, and contrary to all information, imputed to a respectable person, dirty offensive actions, how mean must be your character! We shall close this article, sir, by one of the most ingenious fallies of your book, formerly called, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, now *Raison par Alphabet*.

*Whoever, you say, likes the prophecies of Ezekiel, deserves to take a breakfast with him.* How prettily this is said! And how much certain readers must have been pleased with this piece of wit!

*Deserves to take a breakfast with him.* He certainly would get but a poor breakfast with Ezekiel. He would eat bad bread baked under the ashes of lighted dung, according to the custom of those poor nations who lived around him. But he would get a still worse breakfast with you. He would eat on his bread instead of sweetmeats.——Fie. This is not Ezekiel's breakfast, but one prepared by you. You cooked it up in order to regale your readers. Once more, Fie.

*Whoever likes the prophecies of Ezekiel, deserves to take a breakfast with him.* And what does he deserve, who does not think it beneath him, to descend to these flat coarse jests? O great man, how mightily do you fall, and how much we pity you!

Thus, sir, expressions which are loose in our modern idioms, but decent in ancient languages, visions which you take for realities, real actions which you represent in false and odious colours, &c. &c. are the great objections which you make to our prophets.



Can a man who is so *intimately acquainted with antiquity* as you are, make such objections? Is it not unfair, sir, to separate those expressions, those types, &c. from the times and circumstances in which our prophets lived, from the countries which they inhabited, from the manners of the people to whom they spoke, from the holy lives which they led, from their fine geniuses, their disinterestedness, their courage? Is it not ridiculous to judge of their age by ours, and to expect to find in them our dresses, languages and manners: You have often asserted that this was absurd, when will you assert it with sincerity?

§ 7. *Whether the Jewish prophecies were fabricated after the event.*

You have still one objection remaining, sir; this is to assert with Porphyry that our prophecies were fabricated after the event. Do you chuse this as your strong hold, sir? It is the least tenable post of them all.

1st, You cannot defend this pretended supposition any other way, than by abandoning most of your former assertions. Indeed if, as you maintain, all our prophecies are vague, equivocal, obscure, applicable to every kind of events, it is in vain to have recourse to a supposition advanced without proofs. If this pretended supposition is looked on as a medium, necessary to the explanation of our prophecies, this is a tacit acknowledgement, that there are some of them, nay many, of striking clearness. For if only some of them were clear, lucky accidents, the art of conjecture, the *calculation of chances* would sufficiently account for them.

2dly, If our prophecies were fabricated after the event, by whom were they fabricated? Was it by a single forger? Is it probable that one forger could have talents sufficient, for talents were surely needful, to write all the Jewish prophecies from Moses to Malachi; that he had knowledge sufficient of ancient and more modern times, to connect all these prophecies with the history of our nation, and with that of all



the neighbouring nations, without falling into any of those anachronisms, which soon betray an impostor? Could one forger have art enough to conform himself so exactly to the language, the ways of thinking, and various customs of those different ages, in which he was to place those prophecies, and their authors? What single man could have flexibility of style sufficient, to be pure, forcible and noble with Moses, elegant and sublime with Isaiah, tender and pathetick with Jeremiah, pompous with Ezekiel, obscure with Hosea, rough and coarse with Amos? &c. &c. What man could have taste sufficient to insert those various tints in his compositions which distinguish writers of different ages, and even cotemporary writers from one another? And in short, what man could add to all these uncommon gifts such sublime ideas of the divinity, such unerring principles with respect to morality, such just notions of true piety, as may be found in the writings of our prophets?

Will you rather say, that these prophecies were the work of several forgers? But, sir, if you increase the number of forgers without solving the preceding difficulties, you will necessarily add new ones to the former. It would be still harder to conceive how such harmony could subsist between these different compositions, with respect to history, language, manners, &c. And thus the success of the forgery would be still more doubtful. Do you not see that the more accomplices there are in a plot, the greater danger there is of a discovery?

How could all these forgers have succeeded in keeping their common secret? And what arts must they have used to get those writings adopted by the Jews, that is, by a people of all others, the most scrupulously attached to the authority of their sacred writings? But, on the other hand, how did it happen that these cunning impostors were weak enough to leave in their compositions those expressions which offend you, those actions which affright you, those plain contradictions with Moses, which would naturally have caused their rejection? Did these impos-



tors join the highest talents to the greatest unskilfulness?

3dly, But, where and when could these prophecies have been forged? In Babylon, Jerusalem, or Alexandria?

In Babylon? There, if we believe you, the Jews *sunk into the deepest ignorance, began to write.* And, there, just as they *began to write*, they composed the prophecies of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, those their master pieces of poetry and eloquence. These ignorant Jews must have had great talents, sir, *Et leurs coups d'Essai, furent des coups de maitre.*

But grant them what talents you please, could they write at Babylon, events posterior to their return into Palestine? Such as the destruction of the Persian empire by the king of Macedon, the rapid progress of this conqueror, his death, the divisions of his successors, the impieties and cruelties practised by one of them in Jerusalem and in Judea, &c. &c.

In order, no doubt, to obviate these difficulties, you sometimes say, that these prophecies were fabricated at Jerusalem, or in Alexandria. We have some Jewish compositions, sir, remaining, which were written, after the captivity, at Jerusalem and Alexandria, the book of *Esdra* for instance, and that of *Wisdom*. Does not a man of taste, like you, sir, and a learned Hebrean, perceive a difference between the correct, elegant, noble style of Isaiah, and the almost barbarous language of *Esdra*? Between the Grecian turn of the book of *Wisdom*, and the antique manner of our prophets? In every nation, the ages of writers are distinguished by these differences of style. You might as well make Cicero a cotemporary of Peter Chrysologus, or Virgil of Sidonius Appollinaris, as place the pretended authors of the prophecies of Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, in the ages of *Esdra*, and of the book of *Wisdom*. This would be as bad to say, that Horace, Livy, Tacitus, Ovid, &c. were written by the monks of the eighth and



ninth centuries. Would you do that piece of service to the scriptures, which father Hardouin did to the clafficks?

If our prophecies had been fabricated at Jerufalem, or in Alexandria, how could the impostors of Jerufalem get them received as true ones, by the schools and fynagogues of Babylon? How could the Jews of Alexandria, not only get them adopted by their brethren of Babylon and Jerufalem, but also, inserted into the cannon of the scripture already closed? And this at a time when the Jews watched with scrupulous care, to preserve the purity of their sacred writings, and whilst other respectable works, such as Tobias, Judith, &c. could not get admittance?

Lastly, fir, you have before your eyes two events, which must several times have struck you. The dispersion of the Jewish nation, and their wonderful preservation, notwithstanding this dispersion and all the calamities which have accompanied it. These things were foretold, and could they be foretold by the impostors of Babylon? Or those of Jerufalem, or of Alexandria? Weigh these considerations, fir, and endeavour to solve these difficulties.

#### C O N C L U S I O N.

This, fir, is part of the reflections we made upon a perusal of your treatise on toleration, and of some other writings which are (1) ascribed to you. We have perhaps sometimes erred; and (2) who does not? But we search after truth with sincerity. If you think us wrong deign to set us right. We do

(1) *Ascribed to you.* We have supposed, agreeable to common fame, that the *Philosophy of History*, the *Defense de mon oncle* some articles of the *Philosophical Dictionary*, were written by the illustrious author whom we are refuting; but we are just now informed, that Mr. Voltaire disowns these works. If they were falsely imputed to him, we beg his pardon, for having supposed him the author of them. We acknowledge them to be unworthy of an author of his rank. *Aut.*

(2) *Who does not?* If Mr. Voltaire, whose knowledge knows no bounds but those of the human mind, has committed some mistakes, can we flatter ourselves with never having erred, we who are almost always confined to a village, in want of many helps, and often of books, and who are unable to consecrate any of our time to study, except such hours of leisure as we can steal away from the more necessary duty of getting our bread? *Idem.*



hereby engage to correct by cancel-leaves, every thing that shall be displeasing to you in this work, *and we will keep our word.*

One thing we must not conceal, but publish it to the world with gratitude. The Jewish nation has some obligations to you. You have cleared us, as far as in you lay, of that crime which makes us abhorred by the whole christian world. If the Aúto da Fez, of Madrid and Lisbon are less bloody, if the severity of that awful tribunal, which tries us, is at length mitigated, for this we are perhaps more indebted to your writing<sup>e</sup> than to any other cause. You have at least often exhorted Christians to look upon us as (1) brethren. Assume the same sentiments towards us, sir, which you wish to instil into others, and keep up every where in the new edition of your works, that of moderation and benevolence, which shines forth in so many parts of your writings.

We remain, sir, with the most sincere respect and admiration.

Your most humble,  
and obedient servants,

*From the neighbourhood  
of Utrecht,  
30th October, 1771.*

*Joseph Ben Jonathan.  
Aaron Matathai.  
David Wincker.*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

M m

(1) *As brethren.* "What," says he, "my brother *the Turk, the Chinese, the Jew* Yes, certainly, are we not children all of us, of the same father, and creatures of the same God?" And is it by indulging such sentiments, that the illustrious writer has so cruelly abused the Jewish nation, both ancient and modern!



1. The first part of the book is a preface by the author, in which he explains the purpose and scope of the work. He states that the book is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject matter, and to serve as a guide for students and researchers alike.

The second part of the book is a detailed discussion of the various aspects of the subject. This section is divided into several chapters, each of which covers a different aspect of the subject. The chapters are written in a clear and concise manner, and are designed to be accessible to a wide range of readers. The author provides a thorough analysis of the subject matter, and discusses the various theories and methods that have been used to study it.

The third part of the book is a collection of exercises and problems, designed to help students apply the concepts and methods discussed in the previous sections. These exercises are written in a clear and concise manner, and are designed to be accessible to a wide range of readers.

The fourth part of the book is a bibliography, which lists the various sources used by the author in writing the book. This section is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on the subject, and to serve as a guide for students and researchers alike. The bibliography is written in a clear and concise manner, and is designed to be accessible to a wide range of readers.



# LETTERS

FROM

CERTAIN JEWS

OF THE

GERMAN and POLISH SYNAGOGUE,

at AMSTERDAM,

To Mr. VOLT A I R E.

SECOND VOLUME.

THIRD PART.

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE MOSAICK LEGISLA-  
TION.

LETTER I.

*The Mosaick Laws, religious and moral, compared  
with those of other ancient nations.*

S I R,

OUR ritual laws are not the only ones you have attacked in your works. Your censures extend to the whole body of the Mosaick legislation.

Let us therefore survey the other parts of this code, which have had the misfortune of falling under your displeasure. A cursory view of it will suffice to convince you, that the *absurdity and barbarism* you charge it with, proceed either from a total ignorance of it, or from the highest injustice. You will acknowledge that whether we consider their religious and moral laws, or their statutes civil, military and



political, equity, humanity, wisdom shines forth in them with conspicuous lustre. And perhaps you may be sorry, that you have, without cause, been driven to such undeserved invectives. This effect will naturally be produced in a generous mind like yours, by the comparison which we are going to make between our laws, and those of the nations highest in fame. Let us begin by our (1) religious and moral laws.

§ 1. *Religious and moral laws of the Jews.*

There is one God, says the Hebrew code, and there is but one. This God alone deserves to be worshipped. He is the Supreme Being, the necessary origin of all beings, no other is comparable to him. He is a pure Spirit, immense and infinite, (2) no bodily shape can represent him. He created the universe by his power, he governs it by his wisdom, and rules all its events by his providence. Nothing escapes his watchful eye, all good and evil proceed from his equitable hand, and as every thing comes from, so every thing enters in him.

Ministers of his service are appointed offerings and sacrifices instituted; but all this pomp is nothing in his eyes, if the sentiments of the heart do not give it life. The worship he requires before every thing, and above every thing, is the acknowledgement of our entire dependance and of his supreme dominion, thankfulness for his benefits, trust in his mercy, fear

(1) *Religious and moral laws.* The ritual laws are also religious laws; but these laws formed, as it were, the body of religion, those of which we are going to speak, are the soul of it. *Edit.*

(2) *No bodily shape can represent him.* Even Pagans know that this was an opinion of the Jews. Tacitus, altho' in other respects their enemy, does them this justice. "The Jews," says he, "worshipped but one God, whom they conceived only in thought, a sovereign, eternal, unchangeable God. They esteem those profane who employ perishable substances to represent the divinity under a human form. For this reason they have no statues in their temples, nor even in their cities. They are strangers to this method of flattering princes, and do not pay this compliment even to our Cæsars: *Judei mente solâ unumque numen intelligunt: prophanos qui Deum imagines mortalibus materiis in species hominum effingunt. Summum illud et eternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum. Igitur nulla simulachra urbibus suis, necum templis sunt; non regibus hæc adulatio, non Cæsaribus honor.*

What shall we think of Mr. Voltaire, who taking advantage of some metaphorical expressions of scripture, coolly affirms, that the Jews believed God to be corporeal? Is this great man less acquainted with the Jews, or is he less equitable towards them than even Pagans? *Aut.*



and love. *I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven images. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and (1) with all thy strength.* These are true and sublime ideas, and which eminently distinguish the Jewish from all ancient legislators.

What purity and beauty in his morality! Is there a vice which it doth not severely condemn? It is not sufficient that actions are forbidden, even desires are prohibited. (2) *Thou shalt not covet.* He not only requires perfect equity, probity untainted, faithfulness, justice, the most exact honesty, but he would have us besides to be humane, compassionate, charitable, ready to do unto others what we could wish they would do unto us. (3) *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* In short, whatever can make a man respectable in his own eyes, and dear to his fellow creatures, whatever can insure the peace and happiness of society, is there placed in the list of duties.

Is it astonishing then to hear Moses himself, struck with admiration at the excellence of these laws, breaking out in the following transport: *And what nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?*

§ 2. *Comparison of these laws with those of ancient nations.*

Where could you find in all antiquity, sir, religious institutions more pure, and moral precepts more conformable to the feelings of nature, the light of reason, and the sacred rules of decency and virtue? Recal to your mind the laws of the most celebrated ancient nations: what false and whimsical ideas of the divinity! What objects of worship! What extravagant, impure, cruel rites! What impious opi-

(1) *With all thy strength.* See Exodus, 20th ch. and Deuteronomy, 5. *Aut.*

(2) *Thou shalt not covet.* See Exodus, ch. 20. *Aut.*

(3) *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, &c.* Leviticus, ch. 19. *Aut.*



nions, scandalous excesses, barbarous customs, authorized or tolerated by these boasted legislators! From the heavenly bodies which give us light, down to the plants which grow in our gardens; from the man celebrated for his talents or his crimes, down to the venomous reptile which (1) creeps under the grass, every thing had its worshippers. Here behold a sacrifice of female modesty, there human blood flows upon the altars, and the dearest victims expire in those flames (2) which superstition has lighted up. A little farther violence is offered to nature by brutal love, and humanity debased by unworthy and barbarous treatment. Every where the people live in shocking ignorance, and the philosophers (3) in error and uncertainty. Let us draw a veil over this mortifying picture of human blindness, which many

(1) *Creeps under the grass.* Many writers, even among Heathens, have charged the Egyptians with worshipping plants and animals. *Quis nescit*, says Juvenal, *qualia demens Egyptus portenta colat?* &c. Others endeavour to justify them. They say, that this was rather a civil and political practice, than a religious worship; such as the attention of the Dutch to preserve storks, which it is forbidden to kill in Holland under the severest penalties. This might be believed with respect to useful animals, but what political motive could engage the Egyptians to worship hurtful animals, such as Crocodiles, &c. We think this worship very similar to that which the Africans pay at this time to their \* *Fetiches*, and to proceed from the same superstition and folly. Upon the whole, even if the Egyptians were not chargeable with this, it is undoubted that many ancient nations had objects of worship as ridiculous as those of the African negroes. We can produce the authority even of Mr. Voltaire for this. *Aut.*

\* *Fetiché* is a general term for the objects of worship of the negroes on the coast of Guinea. *Translator.*

(2) *Which superstition has lighted up.* We intend to give proofs of all these facts in the sequel. *Aut.*

(3) *In error and uncertainty.* We doubt not but a body of wise maxims and excellent moral precepts might be formed by putting together the best things, which the heathen legislators and philosophers have said. However it cannot be denied that these maxims and precepts are found in their writings accompanied with error and uncertainty, not only with regard to those great truths, which are the only solid basis of virtue, the existence of a God, his justice and providence, the liberty of man, &c. But even with regard to the most essential duties of morality. And it should not be matter of surprise, that the ancient philosophers, in the midst of heathen darkness, fell into these errors, when we see the moderns, altho' enlightened by the torch of revelation, calling in question, attacking these truths, and even whilst they are continually talking of morality and virtue, sapping their foundations. The pernicious opinions, the dangerous systems by which they have dazzled and discredited this age, are the most convincing proof that man wants another guide besides philosophy to lead him to virtue. *Aut.*



others before us have traced out. But whilst we are turning our eyes from these dismal objects, permit us to ask you, why so many mistakes among nations so wise, and so much wisdom *among the ignorant and barbarous Hebrews*? Does it not proceed from this, that all other nations had only the weak and glimmering light of human reason for a guide, and that among the Hebrews a superior reason had enlightened its darkness and fixed its uncertainties?

We shall insist no longer, sir, on our religious and moral laws: they are too well known, and their superiority over all ancient legislatures is too remarkable to require any further discussion.

We remain, &c.



## LETTER II.

*Of the political laws Moses.*

WE are not perfectly acquainted with these laws, sir, we confess it; but so much as the abridged recital of our history discovers to us, suffices to give us an high idea of the legislator, and of the plan of government he had formed.

§ 1. *Plan of government traced out by Moses.*

At the head of this government I see a Sovereign the most worthy of an entire obedience, it is that God who is the object of worship in it.

This God, master of the universe, but elected king of Israel by the unanimous and voluntary suffrages of a people, who owed to him their liberty and property, holds his court in the midst of them. The sons of Levi are his guards and officers; the tabernacle his palace. There he interprets his laws, issues his orders, and declares peace or war.

As supreme monarch, and at the same time, the object of worship, he unites at once civil and religious authority. Thus the state and the church, so distinct elsewhere, here coalesce. These two powers, so far from clashing, mutually support each other, and the divine authority impresses a sacred character, even on the civil laws, and by consequence an influence which they never had in any other government.

Under Jehovah, a chief, his lieutenant and viceroy, governs the nation conformably to his laws.



He is a leader in war, a judge in peace. Death is the penalty for disobedience (1) to his orders. Yet his authority is neither despotic nor arbitrary. A senate, formed of the most distinguished members of all the tribes, is appointed (2) for his council. He advises with them in matters of importance, and if there are national concerns to be discussed, *the whole congregation*, that is (3) *the assembly of the people*, or to speak according to the moderns, the *states* are convoked, matters are laid before them, they determine, the chief executes.

The same order subsists in the different tribes. Each has its prince, its senate, its heads of families. Under these latter were the heads of those branches which sprang from them, and under them the leaders of thousands, hundreds, (4) fifties, tens, &c. each of them invested, according to his place, with civil and military power.

By these wise regulations a powerful militia quickly raised, marches under its leader *as one man*; justice is administered, good order is maintained, subjects are kept within bounds, the authority of their superiors is confined within just limits, all parts of the government (5) support and balance each other, and a blessed harmony prevails thro' the

N n

(1) *To his orders.* See Joshua, chap. 1. verses 16, 17, &c. *Aut.*

(2) *For his council.* See Numbers, chap. 11, ver 17. ch. 32, v. 1 and 2. Joshua, ch. 19, v. 15. ch. 17, v. 7. ch. 22. v. 13 and 14. The authority of judge among the Hebrews was pretty nearly equal to that of the consuls at Rome, the kings at Lacedemon, the suffetes at Carthage. Governments which were not by any means barbarous. *Aut.*

(3) *The assembly of the people.* These assemblies, under Moses when the Hebrews formed a body of troops, bore some resemblance to the assemblies of the Greeks, described in the Iliad, and to the assemblies of the people at Athens, Lacedemon and Rome. It is probable that some time after, they were composed only of the deputies, and representatives of the people, as the house of commons of England, and the states of Holland are, &c. *Edit.*

(4) *Of fifties, tens.* &c. See Deuteronomy, ch. 16, v. 18. *Aut.*

(5) *Support and balance each other.* In this government no man could



state. Is this, fir, a plan of government worthy only of an *absurd and barbarous legislator*.

§ 2. *Precautions taken to maintain union among the tribes.*

Division among the tribes could alone destroy this harmony, and therefore the wisest precautions are taken by the legislator to keep them ever closely united.

Already a community of origin and of blood united them; these ties are still faster bound by religion, they have the same God, the same worship, the same ministers of worship, one altar, one temple, and they are bound to resort to it from all quarters.

Even this is not sufficient, the tribe of Levi scattered amongst the others without being particularly attached to any one of them, announces the same doctrine, and teaches the same law. And if, to shorten the length, and lessen the costs of suits, each tribe, (1) each city, has its judges for expediting private affairs, where the sense of the law is clear, there is besides a supreme tribunal appointed to determine (2) nice questions, and the disputes between tribe and tribe. This national court

have fortune or power sufficient to usurp sovereign authority, and to make attempts, against public liberty. Besides, in such an attempt, the judge would have been stopt by the princes of the tribes, and these, by the judge and heads of families, &c. The priests and Levites, whom the dignity of their office, and their superior knowledge might have raised above the others, were rendered dependant on them because they possessed no lands, &c. The more we reflect on this form of government, the more we shall find it wisely calculated for the support of common liberty. *Edit.*

(1) *Each city has its judges.* See Deuteronomy ch. 16, v. 18. *Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, &c. Aut.*

(2) *Nice questions.* See Deuteronomy, ch. 17, v. 8 and 9. *If there arise a matter too hard for thee, in judgment, then shalt thou arise and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose. And thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites and unto the judge that shall be in those days. And thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place shall shew thee. And the man that will not hearken unto the priest or unto the judge, even that man shall die, &c. Aut.*



decides without appeal, and as its jurisdiction extends to all parts of the state, it maintains union amongst them, as well as justice and order.

For this purpose were those severe laws enacted against foreign worship, against those cities or tribes which would revolt or separate. You censured the severity of those laws, merely because you did not know (1) the political reasons of them.

We request you will answer us this question, Have the present governments, which most nearly resemble that of Moses, known how to place such powerful bonds of union between the parts which compose them.

§ 3. *How dear this government must have been to the people.*

If the great art of the legislator is to attach the subject to the form of government which he establishes, what form in the world could have more charms for the Hebrews than this? No other ever came nearer to the appointment of nature. It was the authority of the father of a family over his children, that of the children over the grand-children, that of the grand-children over the great grand-children, &c. All of these kept up in some degree their rights of nature, and these respectable and darling rights were transferred from

(1) *The political reasons of them.* It cannot be denied that besides the zeal for religion and justice, this political object was one of the motives of that severity, which was intended against the tribes beyond Jordan, and which was put in practice against the Benjamites, the Ephraimites, &c. Perhaps passion had its share, but the bent of the law was not less wise. The more union was necessary among the tribes, the more severely a spirit of division was to be punished. This observation alone shews how vain and ill placed are the illustrious author's declamations upon these two facts, against the want of toleration for foreign worship. Is he so little acquainted with our history, as not to have made this reflection? And will he henceforward think that there is much reason for his jest, that the Ephraimites were slaughtered because they could not pronounce the word *schiboleth*? *Aut.*



elder to elder, down to the most distant generations.

In this domestick and family-government, if we may use these expressions, places of power and authority were not titles to plunder, or revenue employments; every thing was free. Therefore but light tributes were exacted, which were appointed by law, and the uses they were applied to softened the rigour of exactions. Some of these taxes were appointed (1) to help the indigent, and (2) to keep up public worship; others allotted to the ministers of this worship, as a just recompence for their services, and as a proper indemnification for their not having had any share (3) in the distribution of lands.

§ 4. *Wisdom of these laws in the distribution of lands.*

The distribution of lands has been looked upon by all ancient nations as a master-piece in politics. Where were they more wisely distributed than (4) in our legislator? The institutions of the famous Spartan legislator, so much extolled by the Greek writers, must yield the palm, in this

(1) *To help the indigent.* Such was the tithe of the third year, it was given in particular to the poor. *When thou hast made an end of tithing, all the tribes of thine increase, the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates and be filled.* Deuteronomy, ch. 26. v. 12. *Aut.*

(2) *To keep up publick worship.* Every Israelite paid annually to the sanctuary half a shekel. *Aut.*

(3) *In the distribution of lands.* The Almighty said to Aaron, *Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land. I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance.* Numbers, ch. 18. v. 20, and 21. It is very remarkable that Moses, who was of the tribe of Levi, gave no lands to the priests or Levites. this piece of policy was in direct opposition to that of Egypt, where the priests possessed so much land free of taxes. *Aut.*

(4) *In our legislature.* *And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families, and to the more ye shall give more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give less inheritance. Every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth.* Numbers, ch. 33. v. 54. *Aut.*



respect, to the Jewish legislator. In the distribution appointed by this great man, every one out of six hundred thousand soldiers, introduced into the land of Canaan, was to get a portion of ground sufficient to maintain him and his family in decent affluence. Moses is not satisfied with insuring to them the possession of these lands by the laws of men, as other legislators did, he consecrated it by religion. According to these principles, Jehovah is the only Lord in the land which (1) he gives to the Hebrews. They are all his vassals, and their lands are so many fiefs which they hold immediately from God, and from him only. To seize these lands or dispossess the tenants, would have been an act of high treason.

But these fiefs are not granted to them without conditions of service. One of the principal of these is military service. (2) On this condition merely they possess them. By this means the state was always supplied with a militia of six hundred thousand men, made up, not of adventurers pressed into the service, or drawn into it through want or libertinism, but of citizens, who, besides their liberties and lives, had (3) a good property to defend; these forces were sufficient to resist, not only the small nations in the neighbourhood, but even the powerful empires of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, especially in a country which was on all sides difficult of access.

Although this plan of government appears absurd to you, yet the wise and learned chancellor Bacon,

(1) *He gives to the Hebrews.* For the land is mine, says the Lord, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me, that is vassals, copy-holders, to whom I grant part of my domains. See Leviticus, ch. 35, v. 23. *Aut.*

(2) *On this condition,* See Lowman. *Aut.*

(3) *A good property.* If Moses's plan had been executed, every one of the six hundred thousand Israelites, capable of bearing arms, would have had, upon a medium, about twenty two acres of land, abstracting more than three millions nine hundred thousand acres, which were reserved for publick uses. For according to this present computation, the land promised to the Israelites was to contain fourteen millions nine hundred and sixty thousand acres. See the dissertation of the learned Lowman on the civil polity of the Hebrews *Aut.*



whose political knowledge, we may suppose, was as great as yours, (1) found it admirable.

§ 5. *Wisdom of that law which made their lands unalienable.*

It is not sufficient to have formed this noble plan. In order to render it permanent, the legislator declares that these lands, and the farms necessary for their improvement, shall be absolutely (2) unalienable. They were given to the fathers, and must pass to the children, and remain for ever in the same tribes and families. This law was the effect of deep and wise policy. It perpetuated all the advantages of the first distribution, and by confining the citizen to his original spot, it kept up in him the love of industry and frugality. It repressed avarice, it prevented the ambitious schemes of great land-holders, and the oppression of the poor, jealousies, discontent, factions, and all those evils which other commonwealths vainly endeavoured to remedy by their Agrarian laws.

This, sir, is a slight sketch of Moses's plan of government. Even by this poor description, consider whether you have justly given the epithet of *absurd* to our political laws, and whether our misfortunes are not rather owing to our infringement of those laws than to their pretended *absurdity*.

A little equity would rather incline you, instead of censuring our political laws, to admire so wise a form of government, founded in so remote antiquity.

We are, &c.

(1) *Found it admirable.* See his History of Henry VII. *Aut.*

(2) *Unalienable.* The land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine, saith the Lord. Leviticus, ch. 25, v. 23. We shall observe here, that the houses in cities might be alienated. If they were not redeemed within the year they remained the property of the purchaser. This difference between property in city and country, is entirely in favour of agriculture, and is sufficient to shew the esteem which the legislator had for it, an esteem which he wanted to impress on the Hebrews too. The products of agriculture are the only things of true value. Every wise government will deem them such, and will endeavour to multiply land-holders. *Aut.*



## LETTER III.

*Of the military laws of the Jews.*

OUR military laws, sir, are chiefly the objects of your censure. They appear to you inhuman, barbarous; and we are not surprized at it, because you judge of them according to your prejudices, and the customs of your own country; but consider them impartially, and you will observe in them a tenderness towards the citizen, and even towards the enemy, which other nations were strangers to in those ancient times, and which modern nations have not always imitated.

§ 1. *Tenderness of the Jewish military laws towards the citizen.*

By these laws, as well as by those of all nations at that time, every citizen able to bear arms was a soldier. But the Jewish government paid an indulgent and wise regard to the tenderness of the citizen for objects naturally dear to all men, and ordered, that when the troops were assembled, the leaders should make the following declaration, *What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? And what man is he that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in battle.* Deuteronomy, ch. 20, v. 5.

They also permitted those that were *fearful and faint-hearted* to retire (1) before the engagement. This was also a wise institution. By this condescension to these weak men, they were prevented from disheartening their brethren, and it taught the combatants to confide less in their numbers than their valour,

(1) *Before the engagement.* Those who thus retired before the engagement were employed in the service of the combatants. They were ordered to repair the roads, and carry the baggage, &c. &c. *Edit.*



and in the protection of the Lord of Hosts, of whom they had experienced so many fortunate instances.

If they returned victorious, in order to bring them back to more tender feelings, after the rage of battle, the law ordered that they should consider themselves as polluted by this, perhaps necessary slaughter, and unworthy of thus appearing in the camp of the Almighty; they were therefore to employ an whole day in purifying themselves before they went into it.

Such fir, were the dispositions of this *barbarous* legislature towards the citizen.

§ 2. *Military laws of the Jews concerning the enemy. The order for demanding satisfaction before a declaration of war. Prohibitions against unnecessary waste.*

Let us now consider the regulations appointed with regard to the enemy. We shall not speak here of the wars of the Lord against proscribed nations; this was an exception to our military laws, of which, perhaps, we may say something hereafter. We confine ourselves at present to the wars of the nation against other nations. In these our government ordered us to act with such moderation, as would certainly have struck you, if before you criticized our laws, you had taken the pains to read them carefully.

In the first place, the law forbid us to undertake any war through caprice, ambition, or spirit of conquest, as so many kings and nations have done, those illustrious renowned in your histories. We were allowed to take up arms only to defend ourselves against unjust invasions, or to procure satisfaction for wrongs that had been done, and we were not permitted to enter the enemy's country until satisfaction had been refused.

But even then the law prohibited all that unnecessary waste and havock, which are authorized by the laws of war (1) among other nations; it forbid us,

(1) *Among other nations.* Even those who suffered this waste, rather looked upon it as a misfortune than a piece of injustice, *Uri segites, dirui tecta* (says Livy) *misera magis quam indigna. Aut.*



to cut down fruit trees, or to fell even those which did not bear fruit, except where there was an absolute necessity. *Are the trees, the law says, enemies which can fight against you, so that you must cut them down?* These surely, sir, are not barbarous rules and ordinances. We think they might excite a blush in the nations, which are now most famed for politeness and humanity.

§ 3. *Treatment of besieged cities.*

The Jewish legislature went still a step farther than this first instance of humanity. Even when after a victory an enemy's city was besieged, the law obliged us to (1) *proclaim peace unto it*. If they accepted it before the assault and opened their gates, the only punishment to be inflicted on them was, that they should become *tributaries unto us* and (2) *serve us*.

But if they refused an accommodation, and persisted in a defence, then the law permitted us to take the place by assault. And in order to punish them for their obstinate resistance in risking to bring upon themselves all the horrors of war, and to shew an example to intimidate others, the law gave them up to our discretion. *Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword*; observe this expression (3) *every male thereof*, that is all those who bear arms, for then every man was a soldier. This is the sense of (4) the original. And take notice too, that this is a permission granted and not an order given, for we were allowed to make prisoners.

The object therefore of this statute, was not to oblige us to kill all those who bore arms, but to

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(1) *Proclaim peace unto it*. Deuteronomy, ch. 20. *Aut.*

(2) *Serve us*. Ibidem. *Aut.*

(3) *Every male thereof*. See ibidem. *Aut.*

(4) *The original*. Josephus understands it in the same sense of those who bore arms and made resistance.

Ancient nations generally killed on those occasions all the males of the age of fourteen, and the Romans particularly gave instances of this severity against such cities as made an obstinate defence. *Cæsar*, says *Levy*, speaking of Tarentum, *totâ urbe passim facta; nec ulli puerum qui obvius fuit parcellatur*. But they pushed this cruelty sometimes farther. We shall produce some instances of it. *Aut.*



prevent us from killing any others. In those times, most nations, in the heat of the assault, and even after it, massacred every one they met with, without distinction of age or sex. But our law forbade us to kill any except those who bore arms. It ordered us, even in these moments of tumult and carnage, to spare women and children, because as they could neither make nor advise war, it deemed them worthy of being treated with less rigour.

Thus, this statute, which you think *so barbarous*, had no other view than to repress those cruelties which were then practised, and to confine us within the bounds of that severity which is unfortunately necessary on those occasions, a severity which is practised among the most polite nations.

§ 4. *Treatment of prisoners of war.*

This is not all, sir; observe with what caution the law orders the Hebrew foldier to treat his prisoners of war; it does not abandon them to the insolence and brutality of the conqueror. *If thou seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldst have her to thy wife, then thou shalt bring her home to thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails. And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month, and after that thou shalt go in unto her and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.* “ This is an admirable statute, says, Philo.

“ On one hand, instead of tolerating that licentiousness which custom, and the laws of other nations authorized, it kept the foldier, during thirty days, in constraint, and as it shewed him his captive, during this interval, in an undress, and stripped of all those ornaments which might add to her charms, it gave him time and opportunity to moderate the violence of his passion. On the other hand, this law was a balm to the sorrows of the captive. If she was a maiden she must have been distressed that she could not be married ac-



“ according to her heart’s desire, and with the con-  
 “ sent of her parents. If she was a widow, she must  
 “ have been afflicted too for the loss of her first hus-  
 “ band, and for being obliged to take up with an  
 “ imperious master in the person of her (1) se-  
 “ cond.”

But, the law goes on, *if it shall be that thou have  
 no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither  
 she will, but thou shalt not sell her at all for money,  
 thou shalt not make merchandize of her, because thou  
 hast (2) humbled her.* This was a just penalty for  
 the inconstancy of the victorious soldier, and a kind  
 reparation to the unfortunate woman, for the abase-  
 ment which she had endured in the house of a stran-  
 ger, and also for the affront of seeing herself cast off  
 by him, at the very time she might have expected  
 to become his wife. We know, sir, that some hea-  
 then commanders have been immortalized for their  
 continence on such occasions, but produce any an-  
 cient nation, whose government treated prisoners  
 of war with so much tenderness and respect as  
 ours.

§ 5. *Laws of war more gentle among the Hebrews,  
 than among other ancient nations.*

Such are those military laws, sir, which you de-  
 clare to be *detestably cruel*. They are in truth so ma-  
 ny lessons of humanity fitted to these barbarous times,  
 so many commands given to our fathers to abstain  
 from those shocking practices, which all nations then

(1) *Second.* Therefore, according to the learned Jew of Alexandria, the  
 law did not allow the first familiarities of the soldier with his captive. He  
 was obliged to marry her. This is also the opinion of the Talmudists of Je-  
 rusalem, of Josephus, Abravanel, &c. *Aut.*

(2) *Humbled her.* See Deuteron. ch. 21, v. 10. That is, according to  
 Abravanel, because you have cast her off, after having confined her to severe  
 trials, during a month. But even if we were to understand by this word  
 the victor’s enjoyment of his captive, yet this law would still be more fa-  
 vourable to her than those of most other nations, who were allowed every  
 familiarity with their captives, and afterwards sold them, or married them  
 to their slaves. See the complaints of Polixena in Euripides, and those of  
 Andromache in Virgil.

*Stirpis Achillææ fastus juvenemque superbum*

*Servitio enixa tulimus, qui deinde*

*me famulam famuloque Heleno transmisit habendam. Edit.*



indulged themselves in, and which in later times, the most polished people, Persians, Greeks, Romans, &c. under kings, and commanders the most famed for gentleness and benevolence, practised. Yes, sir, even when nations became more civilized, and manners more gentle, the vanquished had (1) no law to mitigate the severities of war. According to the general opinion, their property, their liberty, their lives, every thing was at the mercy of the victor. This was the right of war acknowledged by all nations; and often the incensed conqueror executed this barbarous law to the utmost rigour. He plundered and slaughtered every thing without regard of age or sex; slavery was the happiest lot which those unfortunate persons could hope for, who escaped from the foldier weary of carnage. Thus Sidon was treated by Ochus, Tyre by Alexander, the towns (2) of the Marfi by Germanicus, Jerusalem by Titus, Majozamalcha and Dacires by an emperor who was (3) a philosopher too. Now, sir, exalt the apostate Christian, and censure the Jewish legislator. Accuse his military laws of cruelty and barbarity, whilst they are indisputably more gentle, than those of any ancient or modern nation that has not yet been enlightened by revelation.

(1) *No law to mitigate.* It was the general maxim, *Lex nulla victo parit Senec. Trag. Aut.*

(2) *Of the Marfi.* Tacitus informs us of this. *Non sexus*, he says, *non ætas miserationem attulit.* See Annals, lib. I. ch. 51. Josephus uses almost the same words, speaking of the taking of Jerusalem by Titus. This general, of so gentle a character, caused a great number of Jews to be slaughtered there who surrendered at discretion. Two thousand prisoners of war were hanged by his orders, and two thousand more exposed to wild beasts, or forced to kill one another in the shews which he gave at Cesarea and Beritus. *Aut.*

(3) *A philosopher too.* When Majozamalcha was taken by Julian, every thing in it was slaughtered without distinction of age or sex. *Sine Sexus discrimine vel ætatis quidquid impetus reperit, potest iratorum absumpsit.* This great and populous city was utterly destroyed. *Ampla & populosa civitas in pulverem cecidit & ruinas.*

Dacires was treated in the same manner. When Julian's army found it abandoned by the inhabitants, it was plundered. *The women that were left were slaughtered, and the city was destroyed in such a degree, that those who would have seen the place on which it stood, would never have thought that there had been a city there.* See Ammianus Marcellinus & Zosimus. *Aut.*

Thus truly the military laws of the Persians, Greeks, and Romans, &c. were gentle, and those of the Jews barbarous. *Edit.*



You will perhaps say, that the Hebrews did not always observe that moderation which was enjoined them. If some of them deviated from it without lawful reasons, and superior orders, we give them up to you. But be candid, sir, censure the transgression, and accuse not those laws which condemn it.

§ 6. *A false charge of the celebrated writer confuted.*

Judge now, sir, with what equity you have said, that *it was our custom to kill all males in cities taken by assault*; and again, that *we were always commanded to kill all, except marriageable women*. Is it not clear that this is a gross calumny against our laws, or an evident proof, before all the earth, that you never read them.

A charge so false, so clearly confuted by the very text of these laws, whether it be voluntary and intended, or only the effect of haste and prejudice, must hurt your works. It is proper to expunge it out of your new edition. We request it of you, less on our own account than on yours. If, after having shewn you so evidently the falsity of it, it be found again in your works, what opinion will the world entertain of your justice and impartiality?

We are most respectfully, &c.



## LETTER IV.

*Of the civil laws of the Hebrews.*

**U**NDER the name of civil laws we comprehend all those, whose object it is to maintain among the individuals of the state, security, plenty, honesty, justice and peace.

We think we do not say too much when we affirm, that the Mosaick legislature is inferior in this respect to none other, ancient or modern; and that if it is compared with the most famous legislatures, it will not lose by the parallel. A full detail of this would lead us too far, we shall confine ourselves to some capital points.

§ 1. *Comparison of some of the civil laws of the Hebrews, with some parallel laws of ancient nations.*

Agriculture is the parent of plenty, the basis and support of states. No laws ever tied down the citizen to his ground, by more powerful bonds than ours. With what pleasure and satisfaction must the Hebrew have cultivated those lands, which were originally given by God to his ancestors, then were handed down from father to son, ever since the origin of this government, and were to pass to his most distant posterity.

For this reason, the cultivation of land, which was despised, being looked on as a servile occupation, and given up to slaves by so (1) many nations, was always accounted an honourable profession among our fathers. This is one of the objects on which the legislator has entered into the greatest (2) detail.

(1) *So many nations.* The Spartans for instance, did not cultivate their lands, this was the business of the Helotes. *Edit.*

(2) *Into the greatest detail.* Hence so many laws to prevent waste in the country, to preserve and increase such animals as were useful for cultivating land, but especially the strong preference given to property in the country, to that in cities. *Aut.*



What great uprightness our legislature required in our judges ! Rome permitted hers to receive small presents, *Munuscula*. "Our law," says Josephus, "forbids them under pain of death, to receive (1) any."

Most ancient nations had religious asylums, from whence the greatest criminals could not be dragged ; "and these asylums," says the celebrated writer of the spirit of laws, "increased so much, especially in Greece, that magistrates found it difficult to execute justice." Moses appointed but one of these, and it was for man-slaughter. *He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall be surely put to death. And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver him into his hand, then I will appoint thee a place whether he shall flee. But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile, (2) thou shalt take him from mine altar that he may die.* And none of the ransoms authorized by other legislators for this crime, could be taken (3) in ours.

Wise instructions secured the honour of our wives, and the modesty of our daughters. Compare these

(1) *To receive any.* See Josephus against Appion. *Edit.*

(2) *Thou shalt take him from mine altar.* See Exodus, ch. 21. v. 12. "The laws of Moses, with regard to asylums, were very wise. Those who had committed man-slaughter were innocent, but it was proper to take them from before the relations of the deceased. He therefore appointed an asylum for them. Those who had committed great crimes deserved no asylum and they got none. The Jews had but one tabernacle, and one temple, the vast concourse of men-killers, coming from every quarter, might have disturbed divine service. If they had been driven out of the country, it was to be feared that they would worship strange gods. For these reasons, cities of asylums were established." See spirit of laws, Vol. II. *Aut.*

(3) *In ours.* These kinds of ransoms were used amongst all ancient nations. They were authorized by the laws of all the northern nations, Germans, Franks, Lombards, &c. The murder of a man was bought off for a few crowns. This barbarous custom is not yet abolished among certain Christian nations ; there are yet, that some, where a rich man, for a small sum, may kill a poor man with impunity. Mr. Voltaire has very justly exclaimed against this shocking remainder of barbarism. We delight in doing him this piece of justice. It must be allowed that this great writer has often past just censures, and given useful advice to the age he lives in. *Edit.*



institutions with the (1) nakedness, the lending, (2) the promiscuous use of women established by certain legislators.

Compare our marriage laws with those of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, &c. which permitted not only cousin-germans to marry, (3) but the uncle the niece, the brother the sister, the father and daughter, and even (4) the mother and the son, and tell us on which side stood decency and wise policy.

You accuse our government of barbarity. But if the time and space allotted to a letter would admit it, we could readily set the gentleness and equity of our laws in opposition to the justice and cruelty of parallel laws of ancient nations.

In this legislature, there were none of those (5) hereditary professions, none of those blemishing dis-

(1) *The nakedness of women, &c.* At Lacedemon, on certain days of the year, it was usual for young persons of both sexes, to exercise and dance together naked. *The laws of Sparta*, says Montesquieu, *not only deprived parents of all natural feelings, but also stripped chastity of modesty.* *Aut.*

(2) *The lending, &c.* The laws of Sparta allowed it. It was also practised in the other Grecian commonwealths. There were examples of it even in Rome. *Edit.*

(3) *The uncle with the niece, &c.* The emperor Claudius was the first Roman who married his niece. Marriages between brothers and sisters were common in Egypt and Persia, they were so even among the Greeks; the Romans, and almost all the western nations, abhorred them with good reason. These marriages could not fail to introduce many irregularities in families. See what bishop Taylor says on this. It belongs to sound policy to prevent these irregularities, and to extend as far as the frame of government will permit, the connections and motives of attachment between fellow-citizens.

For these reasons the Jewish lawgiver prohibited such marriages. His laws with regard to this are clear. See Leviticus, ch. 18. Moses there expressly forbids father and daughter to marry, son and mother, father in law and daughter in law, son in law and mother in law, brother and sister of same father and mother, or of same father only, or of same mother only, and whether they were legitimate or illegitimate; the marriages also between grandfather and grand-daughter, nephew and aunt, brother in law and sister in law are forbidden. These laws flowed from wisdom and decency, and besides it is physically useful, and of great advantage to population, to traverse lineage and mix blood. *Edit.*

(4) *The mother with the son.* The ancient Persians, Arabians, Cananeans, Egyptians, &c. have been censured for such incestuous marriages. But the whole western world always abhorred them. *Edit.*

(5) *Hereditary professions.* No one can dispute that these hereditary professions, these distinctions of *Castes*, &c. flowed from bad policy. They could only serve to damp emulation and genius, and to propagate among fellow-citizens hatred and baleful jealousies. *Edit.*



unctions of *Castes*, established among the Egyptians and Brachmans none of those outrageous contempts of one order for the other, which caused seditions for a long time in the Roman commonwealth. Every thing here recalled to the minds of the Hebrews that original equality, and those fraternal feelings, which their common descent from one stock ought to inspire them with.

These sentiments were not confined to the Jews by birth; every other person might share in them. It was a fixed law amongst us, to admit into our religion and our commonwealth all those who, by submitting to the rite of circumcision, would admit (1) our laws and customs. This was a more humane law certainly, and favoured more of true policy, than that odious exclusion of strangers, ordained by so (2) many other legislators.

Review all the laws of ancient nations, what can you find in them, that equals the tender care of the Jewish law-giver, for the orphan, the widow, the poor, and (3) all the distressed? Or that equals the humanity of these two institutions of the seventh year, which set the citizens at liberty who had become slaves, and of the Jubilee year, which restored every fiftieth year to the proprietors, their lands and houses that had been (4) alienated?

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(1) *Our laws and customs.* The law is clear. *The stranger who shall circumcise the flesh of his foreskin, with all the males of his family, shall eat the passover with you, and shall be as one born amongst you. Thus Achior, because he believed greatly in God, and circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, was joined unto the house of Israel unto this day. Judith, ch. 14. v. 6. Aut.*

(2) *Other legislators.* Lycurgus among others, excluded all strangers from his commonwealth. They were not even permitted to tarry long at Lacedemon, and the Lacedemonians were not allowed to travel abroad. This is the observation of Josephus against Appion, Lib. 2. No. 28. Plato produces the same charge against the Spartan law-givers. *Aut.*

(3) *All the distressed.* In the Mosaic legislature there are found many laws in favour of the poor, and pressing exhortations to relieve all those who are in want. Other law-givers produce nothing comparable to this. When we reflect on all these laws and exhortations, in which the law-giver's humanity is so strongly marked, can one bear patiently to hear this great man and his whole plan of government, branded with the names of *ferocity and barbarity*, by a celebrated writer who calls himself impartial? *Edit.*

(4) *Alienated.* Besides the tendency to humanity, these two institutions had a very wise political object; the one prevented the number of citizens



Almost all ancient governments abandoned, without reserve, the slaves of both sexes to the lust and brutality (1) of their masters. You cannot be ignorant (2) to what excesses this permission gave birth, even amongst nations that are often proposed to us as models of wise government. It was reckoned moderation to give up guilty slaves only to cruel punishments, even the innocent were not always spared.

“(3) At Lacedemon, let slaves be treated in  
 “ whatsoever manner, they could not claim the protection of the laws. They were obliged every year  
 “ to receive a certain number of stripes, altho’ they  
 “ had not deserved them, merely lest they should forget the duty of obedience. If any one of them  
 “ looked above his condition, by an elegant figure,  
 “ he was condemned to die, and his master was  
 “ fined, in order that he might by severity prevent

from decreasing and perishing, to the loss of the publick, in the state of slavery; the other restored them to the privileges and offices of a citizen. See Deuteronomy, chap. 15. Leviticus, ch. 25. *Edit.*

(1) *Of their masters.* “ I do think,” says Montesquieu, “ that the policy of the Romans was good in this respect. They gave a loose to the intemperance of masters, (the same may be said of almost all ancient nations.) Slavery has for its object,” he adds, “ utility, not voluptuousness. The laws of decency are founded on the law of nature, and must be felt by all nations. And if the law which protects the modesty of slaves is valid even in arbitrary governments, where absolute power reigns, how much more in others!” This licentiousness was the bane of morals among ancient nations. What could unfortunate slaves do against voluptuous imperious masters, who were restrained by no laws? *Edit.*

(2) *To what excesses.* Excesses of incontinence which are attested by all the ancient writers. Read only Anacreon and Horace, and see to what excesses the Greeks and Romans went in this respect. Even Cato, the wise Cato, carried on a scandalous trade with his beautiful slaves whom he prostituted. There were also excesses of cruelty without bounds. It makes one tremble to read over the Roman laws respecting slaves. They compare them to beasts of burthen, and give them up to the most cruel tortures. Did the master of a family happen to be assassinated, all those that were found under the same roof, or ever within the sound of the voice, were condemned to die without distinction. These laws are the work of ferocity, and the scandal of reason. And can any one prefer such government to ours? *Edit.*

(3) *At Lacedemon.* This is taken out of the 22d Vol. of the Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres, and is written by Mr. Capperonier. This learned Academician seems to think that the *Cryptia* was not authorized by their laws. But altho’ it may not have been authorized, yet it appears at least that it was tolerated by them. *Edit.*



his other slaves from offending hereafter the eyes of the citizens by their outward accomplishments."

The Spartans, authorized by these laws, used to fall upon the Helotes, whilst they were employed in the works of husbandry, and without mercy would destroy the ablest men amongst them, for no other reason but for exercise, and lest these slaves should increase too much.

Rome, more barbarous still, saw her great men slaughtering their slaves, without cause of complaint, in order to throw their bodies into their fish-ponds, to make their lampreys, by such nourishment, more delicious. Even under the eyes of the magistrates, thousands of these unhappy creatures expired in the amphitheatre, for the amusement of a cruel people; and some festival-days caused more human blood to flow in the empire than many days of battle.

Our laws did not give to masters this tyrannical power. They watched over the lives and modesty of slaves. They ordained that if the master, when he struck the slave, put out his eye or broke his tooth, he should (1) send him home free. When they deserved death, the judges were to pronounce the sentence, and if any man, chastized by his master with a stick, died in the act, the master (2) was condemned to die, except he shewed clearly that he had no design to kill him; and he was not secure from prosecution, except the slave survived the correction (3) for some days. For this reason our fa-

(1) *Send him home free.* Exodus, ch. 21. v. 26, 27.

(2) *Was condemned to die.* See Exodus, ch. 21. v. 22. The text says, *he shall be surely punished.* By this the Jewish doctors understand the punishment of death. *Aut.*

(3) *For some days.* The legislator justly supposed that the double apprehension, first, of exposing himself to a prosecution, and then of losing his money, would be sufficient to keep the passion and violence of masters in proper bounds. Therefore the author of the spirit of laws very unjustly cries out, with regard to this law, *What a nation this, in which the civil law was obliged to abate of the law of nature.* He should rather have said, what nations the Spartans, Romans, Sicilians! What nations all the ancient nations! What laws in comparison of those of the Hebrews! These latter put a double restraint on the master, the former none at all. *ES.*



thers were almost (1) the only ancient people among whom there never were any of those rebellions of slaves, which brought so many other states to the (2) brink of ruin.

We might say much more of the wise limitations (3) of paternal authority among the Hebrews, and of the barbarous liberty which the laws gave to the Greeks and Romans, to bring up or to expose their new born infants, and even to kill them of whatever age; of the cruelty of the ancient Roman laws (4) to-

(1) *The only ancient people.* We share this glory with the Athenians, that is, with that ancient people who, of all others, treated their slaves with the greatest gentleness. *Edit.*

(2) *Brink of ruin.* The dangers which the Spartans, Sicilians and Romans incurred from their rebellious slaves are well known. Modern nations have been frequently exposed to the same dangers. *Aut.*

(3) *Of paternal authority.* A woman with child, if she had killed her offspring, a father if he had exposed his new-born infant, would have been condemned as murderers and enemies to that state which they deprived of a citizen. See Josephus and Philo. Even Tacitus has observed that it was deemed criminal in a Jew to kill any of his children, *Necare quengquam ex gratis nefas.* When parents had a wicked incorrigible child, they were obliged to complain to the judges, who ordered him to be put to death. See Deuteronomy, ch. 25.

Heathen nations held other maxims: The custom of exposing or killing new-born infants, which is still common in China and Japan, was universal among the most civilized nations. At Sparta they never brought any children up, who happened to be misshapen, or of a delicate constitution. The tribunal appointed for this enquiry ordered them to be immediately thrown into a pit. The ancient Roman laws went still farther; they gave fathers the absolute right of life and death over their children. *Endo liberis justis jus vitæ, necis; veniendique potestas ei (patri) esto.* They might even sell them three times. This power lasted during their whole life, and ended only with the third sale. *Si pater filium ter venundavit filius a patre liber esto.* Therefore the Roman laws gave a man greater power over his son than over his slave; this is the observation of an ancient writer. *Data patri, majore potestate in filium quam domino in servum.* And Aristotle has maintained that the power of a father of a family over his slaves and his children was so absolute, that he could not possibly do them any injustice. This is noble morality from the prince of philosophers! See Grotius. *Edit.*

(4) *Towards women.* By these laws, a woman convicted of having drank wine, was sentenced to die. A husband who wanted to put his wife legally to death in this case and in that of adultery, needed not to appeal to courts of justice; a meeting of some relations was a sufficient authority. If she was taken in adultery, he might kill her without any form of law, whilst the law gave the woman no power to obtain satisfaction for her husband's irregularities. *In adulterio uxorem tuam si deprehendisses impune necares,* says Cato, *illa te, si adulterares, digito contingere non auderet.* Plutarch thought these laws cruel, but they were conformable to the laws established by Romulus, who made the condition of the Roman women a kind of slavery. Add to this that the husband might put away his wife for having taken his keys. *Aut.*



wards women, and of the equity of ours in this respect; of the moderation which was enjoined us (1) towards our debtors, and of the horrid law of the twelve tables, which allowed the creditors to (2) load the debtors with chains, and after some market-days, to cut them in pieces, and (3) to share amongst them their bloody limbs, or to sell them to strangers!

So far was our legislature from commanding, or permitting us to be cruel towards our fellow-creatures, that it orders us every where to treat even cattle with humanity. *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.* (4) *Thou shalt not take the dam with the young.* *Thou shalt not kill the*

(1) *Towards our debtors.* The following laws must be added to that which ordered us to forgive the debts due to us every seventh year. "Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy poor brother, and shall surely lend him sufficient for his need. Beware that there be not a wicked thought in thine heart, saying, the year of release is at hand. When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge, thou shalt stand abroad and the man shall bring it. No man shall take the nether or the upper mill-stone to pledge, for he taketh a man's life to pledge. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment and bless thee, and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God. *Deuteronomy, ch. 15, and 24. &c. &c.*"

(2) *Load the debtors with chains.* The law permitted the use of chains of fifteen pounds weight; it prohibited any weight above this. *Vncito aut nervo aut compedibus quindecim pondo nec majore.* And no one has cried out, *What a nation these Romans*, who were forbidden by law to crush their debtors under the weight of chains! *Aut.*

We must observe here that this law was one of those enacted by the Decemvirs, partly with a view to mitigate the ancient laws against debtors. We may judge from this how severe they must have been. Under the protection of these laws, creditors treated their debtors with such barbarity, that these cruelties at last excited a general rebellion of all the Plebeians against the great. See Livy, Decad. 1st. This Historian relates there one fact of the highest cruelty. Let Mr. Voltaire compare these laws with ours, and decide. *Edit.*

(3) *To share amongst them their bloody limbs.* These are the words of the law, if our memory does not fail us. "Añ si plures erunt rei, tertiis nudinis partis secanto. Si plus minusve secuerunt, se trade esto; si volent uls Tiberim peregre venundanto. *Aut.*"

Our authors take this law in the same sense that Aulus Gellius and Quintilian do. Tertullian understood it so too. Two moderns, Mr. Binkershoek, a Dutchman, and Mr. Taylor, an Englishman, have maintained that this law only permitted the creditors to divide amongst them the property, not the limbs of the debtor. We wish for the honour of the twelve tables, that these two modern and learned strangers may have better understood the meaning of this Roman law, than two Romans who might be expected to understand it well. *Edit.*

(4) *Thou shalt not take the dam with the young.* See Deuteron. ch. 22. &c.



young one under the eye of his dam. Thou shalt not kill the animal that is pursued which taketh refuge, like a suppliant, in thine house, &c. Yes, sir, the more we study our laws, the more instances we find in them of gentleness and humanity, and the more they are compared with ancient legislatures, the more a man will be convinced of their excellence.

§ 2. *Civil laws of the Jews compared with those of some modern nations.*

But let us drop antiquity. Do you think that your modern legislatures have wiser institutions than ours? We do not presume here to censure the laws of those nations which tolerate us. No, so much assurance would ill become our unhappy situation. It will be sufficient to shew you, en passant, that the Jewish legislature which has no charms for you, is at least free from those defects which you have so often charged on your modern legislatures.

In the first place we have a code; we had it above three thousand years ago; and you have often said, that your polite nations have none. They have this favour still (1) to expect from their sovereigns.

Our code is short and clear; kings can read it, and nations understand it. Your code of laws, we speak your own sentiments, are after so many, years labour, nothing more than undigested compilations, confused heaps of foreign laws and barbarous customs; they are dark labyrinths, in which your most learned counsellors lose their way, and thro' which your greatest lawyers can scarcely shew a path.

The same laws and statutes ruled all the tribes; Juda had none others than those of Ephraim, and the tribe of Manasses the same as that of Benja-

(1) *To expect from their sovereigns.* Two great kings have lately deserved the thanks of their subjects for having given them codes. But France, if we are to believe *le Philosophe ignorant*, has not yet got one. We have no laws, he says, but we have six or seven thousand volumes on the laws. See the supplement to *le Philosophe ignorant*.



min. But among you, "Every town, every ham-  
 "let has its own laws. What is just in one village  
 "is unjust two miles farther, and you change  
 "laws as often as you change post-horses."

Our laws were uniform and invariable. "There  
 "is no stability in yours. They change like  
 "the dresses of men and women. You have  
 "not any fixed laws (1) even in criminal ca-  
 "ses."

You censure the diversity of weights and mea-  
 sures in use in your provinces. In ours, the same  
 weights and measures were every where in use, as  
 well as the same laws.

Your clergy, an order however useful and respect-  
 able, even in a political light, is often the subject of  
 your (2) invectives. You upbraid them with their  
 celibacy, and their great possessions. Ours had no  
 land, and besides gave children to the state.

Our judges were the elders of our cities; they  
 performed the duties of their offices without fee  
 or reward. And you inform us that your judges,  
 almost as soon as they leave school, sit in the sanc-  
 tuary of justice, and there give sentence on the  
 life and honour of a citizen; that their decrees  
 must be paid for, and that they themselves give  
 large sums for (3) the right of pronouncing  
 them.

(1) *Even in criminal cases.* See the supplement to *le Philosophe ignorant*  
 &c. *Aut.*

(2) *Invectives.* Mr. Voltaire after other writers, and other writers  
 after Mr. Voltaire, have often raised their voices against the great pro-  
 perty of the christian clergy. But what would these gentlemen have?  
 Would they have the clergy have no property, not even any thing to  
 live on? This would be somewhat hard. Do they think them too rich?  
 We can affirm that we have often seen, and not without pain, very  
 useful clergy, in poor circumstances. *Edit.*

(3) *The right of pronouncing them.* See especially the *Philosoph.* *Diction.*  
 Article *Montesquieu*. Mr. Voltaire there calls the venality of judges's  
 offices, *that noble traffick of law, which the French only, of all nations on*  
*earth, are acquainted with.* "These men," he says speaking of his coun-  
 trymen, "must be the greatest traders in the world, since they buy and  
 sell even the right of judging men." *Aut.*



You could wish that in your country trials in capital cases were (1) public; in our government, every one was present at such trials, and sometimes the people executed the sentence.

When you consider that your laws inflict on a citizen not yet convicted, a punishment more dreadful than that death which he suffers after certainty of his guilt, you shudder at the thought, and your (2) tender heart recoils. Look into the laws of Moses, you will find that this barbarous custom of the rack, which you abhor, was never known in them. (3) No Jewish woman, curious to pry into such matters, ever asked her husband at his return from court, *My dear, Did you put those men to the rack.*

Your legislatures seem to you (4) extremely severe in the punishments which they inflict on criminals. You think that those lingering deaths in cruel torments, favour much of the barbarous manners of your ancestors. In our legislature punishments were sometimes severe, but the kind of death was never far-fetched.

You do not approve that death should be inflicted by your laws for felony, the punishment you think (5) too great for the crime; our laws punished it only by restitution, fine, or slavery,

*If a stranger sojourn with you, says Moses, in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born among you. And thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (6)*

(1) *Publick.* See the comment on the Treatise of Crimes and punishments, and the Philosophical Dictionary Article of the best legislation. *Aut.*

(2) *Tender heart recoils.* See ibidem, and the supplement to *le Philosophe ignorant*, &c. &c.

(3) *No Jewish woman.* We request our readers to recollect that all these criticisms on modern legislatures are not ours, but belong to Mr Voltaire. *Aut.*

(4) *Extremely severe.* See comment on the treatise of crimes and punishments.

(5) *Too great for the crime.* See ibidem. A wise young prince, the king of Denmark, has lately ordered this crime no longer to be punished by death throughout his dominions. *Edit.*

(6) *The Lord loveth the stranger.* See Deuteron. ch. 22. Levit. 22, 23, &c. *Aut.*



*The Lord loveth the stranger.* Are not these laws kinder, fir, than your (1) *droit d'Aubaine*?

Moses says, *If a man smite the eye of his servant or the eye of his maid, and if he smite out his man-servant's tooth or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let them (2) go free for the sake of the eye or the tooth.* You gentle and humane nations, say to your negroes, "that they are men like you, redeemed with the blood of that God, who died for them as well as for you. And after this you make them work like beasts of burthen, you feed them ill, and if they attempt to run away, you cut off one of their legs, and you oblige them to turn a sugar-mill, after giving them a wooden one."

Our code says, *there shall be (3) no whore of the daughters of Israel*, all your cities are full of them; and if we are to believe your wise men, there ought to be publick endowments for them, and their calling ought to be held honourable.

It says, *he that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy members cut off, shall not enter into the (4) congregation of the Lord.* And Philo affirms that death was the punishment appointed for thus mutilating a man. But you mutilate your children to make (5) *musicians of them for the pope's chapel*, and

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(1) *Droit d'Aubaine.* This is a kind of escheatage. The right of succession in the estate of an alien, dying without naturalization and French born issue. Sovereigns are insensibly abolishing it. A more wise policy has opened their eyes to their true interests. *Edit.*

(2) *Go free.* Exodus, ch. 21. We exhort our readers to compare our laws respecting slavery with the black code, and then to tell us in which of them they find the most humanity. *Aut.*

(3) *No whore in Israel.* See Leviticus, ch. 19. Deuteron. ch. 23. v. 17. See also Josephus and Philo. *Aut.*

The words of this law signify literally, there shall be no *consecrated man or woman*; whence some commentators concluded, that it alludes to those infamous persons of both sexes, who attended in the temples of Baal-peor, Moloch, Priapus, and Venus, and there publicly devoted themselves to prostitution. This was an abominable custom which the laws tolerated, the Pagan religion consecrated, and which the holy legislator forbade his people. They reckoned two thousand such *consecrated* women in the single temple of Venus at Corinth, all supported at the expence of the temple. *Edit.*

(4) *Congregation of the Lord.* See Leviticus, ch. 24. *Aut.*

(5) *Musicians for the pope's chapel.* With what view does the learned



you post up in your towns advertisements informing the publick, where the (1) best operators in this way may be found.

You laugh at the particulars, into which Moses enters for keeping wholesome air in our camps and cities, and cleanliness about our houses and persons; at the ablutions he prescribes after having touched dead bodies; at the attention he recommends to us to cover the blood of slaughtered animals, &c. 'Tis true your laws lay no such troublesome observances on you. No, but the most publick places in your capitals present us with a shocking spectacle of the carcases of animals cut up; (2) the blood flows from street to street, and the dead infect the living even in (3) your temples.

A contagious distemper raged in Palestine and the neighbourhood; the wise precautions of our legislator prevented its communication; and your fathers by observing these, at last kept off (4) this scourge. A still more destructive contagion mows down the flower of your youth, and you have no other secret

christian here attack the head of the christian religion in particular? Is it for the pope only, or for all the princes and operas of Europe, that they make eunuchs in Italy? We must be more equitable than him, and confess that we have been assured at Rome, that many popes have prohibited this barbarous custom, by their bulls, under pain of excommunication. The wise pontiff now on the throne has renewed the same prohibitions. *Edit.*

(1) *Best operators in this way, &c.* Not long ago, says Mr. Voltaire, the following words were written in large characters at Naples, over the door of some barbers, *Qui si castrano maravigliosamente i puti.* See the comment on crimes and punishments. *Aut.*

(2) *The blood flows from street to street.* This spectacle could not fail to offend strangers, who are accustomed to the neatness of the markets in Holland. It is hard to conceive, that in some cities it never came into any man's mind, if not to give the blood of slaughter-houses a free passage by subterraneous canals, yet at least to bring the sewers near the slaughter-houses, or the slaughter-houses near the sewers. *Edit.*

(3) *In your temples.* We are assured that the civil power has often endeavoured to correct this abuse, against which Mr. Voltaire more than once cried out. A corpse in a Jewish temple would have been a profanation. There were but two sepulchres in Jerusalem, that of David and that of Olda. In ancient Rome there was but one, which is still seen there. The Roman laws forbid burying or burning the dead in the city. *Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito, neve urito.* *Aut.*

(4) *This scourge.* From the first rise of the Hebrew government, their legislator enacted laws against the leprosy. For more than two centuries the great and small pox have laid Europe waste, and the nations have not yet got any laws on subjects so important. *Edit.*



for curing it, but to give it to yourselves, and your only method of preserving yourselves from it is (1) to spread it.

Your politicians begin at last to see that the true strength of the state consists in the multitude of people. Moses knew this thirty centuries before them. No legislator ever knew how to incite his people more strongly to population. According to the spirit of this government, celibacy is a misfortune, barrenness a scandal, and a multitude of children the blessing of the Lord. There, every thing favours the instinct of nature, the great command of the creator, for the Messiah is expected, luxury is forbidden, debauchery and all enticements to it (2) are proscribed. Dare you compare these powerful springs, the efficacy of which is still (3) felt amongst us, to the vain declamations of your politicians, which are contradicted by their examples? And indeed these declamations produce noble effects! We will respect your religious celibacy, and will not condemn the decrees of your church. But what swarms of other kinds of unmarried people fill your capitals and provinces! (4) Batchelors in war and in servi-

(1) *To spread it.* Mr. Voltaire claims the honour of being the first who spoke of inoculation in France. Other persons of some understanding, affirm that an eminent physician brought it to light before his time. Let this be as it will, it is not by any means our intent to condemn it. We think on the contrary, that as the practice is tolerated, it is too little used and with too little precaution. We would however give the preference to Mr. Paulet's preservative method, which is the same as that of Moses against the leprosy. We are informed that an eminent physician is preparing to strengthen it by new proofs and experiments. *Aut.*

(2) *Are proscribed.* M. de Montesquieu observes, that fornication contributes little to population, and that incontinence in general is the bane of it. *Edit.*

(3) *Felt amongst us.* Tacitus makes the same observation of the laws in his time; *augendæ multitudini consulitur*, says this historian. These, according to him, were two features in their characters, the desire of having children, and the contempt of death. *Animas æternas putant; hinc generandi amor & moriendi contemptus.* See the history of Tacitus, lib. 5. The Roman laws which offered exemptions and privileges for the encouragement of matrimony, and penalties against the single state, had less effect. The reason of this is, that population rather springs from the manners of the people, than from laws given to them. *Aut.*

(4) *Batchelors in war.* A queen, a worthy model of all sovereigns, has ordered the officers of her army to encourage the soldiers to marry, and has



tude ; batchelors in literature and philosophy, batchelors through caprice and voluptuousness, batchelors through misery and indigence ; batchelors, if we may so express ourselves, even in the married state. And can you then pretend to judge of the ancient population of the Hebrews by your own !

You are perpetually speaking of population, and you cease not to extol luxury ! Luxury, the bane of agriculture and morals, the destroyer of empires, or the certain forerunner of their fall, is every where the object of your encomiums. O thou censurer of Moses, how wise are thy views respecting government, and how deep thy policy !

We might extend this parallel still farther ; you know it, sir, but here we stop. These instances suffice to convince you that the Hebrew code yields not the palm for equity and wisdom, to the codes of modern nations, and that your criticisms on your legislatures, and on the customs which they authorize or tolerate, are so many encomiums on ours.

We think, sir, that you must observe with satisfaction, that after your having reflected deeply on a reformation in your laws, you have proposed nothing but what the Jewish law-giver ordained three thousand years before you. It is a great satisfaction to us at least, to find, that in the bosom of an *ignorant and vulgar* nation, he has anticipated by so many ages, the legislative discoveries of the most shining and universal genius of this philosophical age.

We remain, &c. &c.

provided for the support and education of children born of these marriages.  
*Edit.*



## L E T T E R V.

*Reflexions on the object, antiquity, duration, &c. of  
the Mosaick legislation.*

**A**LTHO' the defence which we have undertaken of our legislature, has already extended to a greater length than we at first proposed, yet we cannot avoid adding here some considerations on its object, antiquity, duration, &c.

This legislator is the glory of Israel in the eyes of all nations. It is the dearest patrimony that our fathers have left us. We should therefore omit nothing that can contribute to make it known, and to give a just notion of it.

1st. "Besides the common object which all governments have of supporting them themselves, each of them has besides a peculiar one," says the illustrious author of the Spirit of Laws. Sparta formed soldiers, Rome conquerors, Carthage merchants and navigators, &c. &c. But the Jewish lawgiver has another object in view, that of forming a virtuous people, who by a faithful service paid to the only true God, shall give an example to all the nations of the earth, of a pure and reasonable worship. Are we mistaken, sir, when we affirm that this object was more noble and more worthy of a wise man than any of the former?

2dly. The most famous legislators made it a rule to change nothing in the ancient superstitions, and to leave their people at full liberty to prostitute their adoration to inferior gods, to the stars, the elements, groves, metals, &c. But Moses looked



on it as a most important obligation, to instruct all the Hebrews in their duty towards the great Creator and governor of the world. To declare to them his power, justice, goodness, and providence, and to teach them to deserve an happy existence under his Almighty protection, by an exact observance of his laws. We think, sir, that such a conduct as this deserves encomiums, even in a philosophical light !

3dly. What legislator ever spoke of the supreme Being to his people, as Moses did to the Hebrews? He gives them the most sublime ideas of him, and keeps them continually under the hand of this great God. Every step they make is to be regulated by the fear and love of him. This sacred correspondence between God and man ruled, ennobled, sanctified our actions. This glorious duty no ancient legislator ever understood better or more strongly recommended. "In other legislatures," says Josephus, "piety is an ingredient of virtue, but in ours all the virtues are subordinate parts of piety."

4thly. This religious and wise form of government, is at the same time the most ancient one we know. Minos and Draco, Solon and Lycurgus, Zaleucus and Numa are posterior, by many ages, to the Jewish legislator : and altho' it is not demonstrated that they (1) borrowed instruction from him, yet it is clear that he could take nothing from them. In this remote antiquity, in those distant ages, to which the grossest corruption of morals, and the most senseless, shameful, and cruel superstitions prevailed on every side, this great man arose, superior to the prejudices of the world, and gave to his people an holy religion, a pure system of morality, a wise and just government. And

(1) *Borrowed instruction.* Altho' this fact is not demonstrated, yet it is at least very probable. *Edit.*



did he owe every thing, do you imagine, to his superior understanding?

5thly. The Jewish, of all ancient lawgivers, is the most learned and virtuous. What reverence he shews to the Divinity, and submission to its decrees! Piety, which is the distinguishing character of his laws, is the constant rule of all his actions. What love for his people, what public spirit, what gentleness! He endures obloquy with patience, he acknowledges his failings with candour, he sees, without murmuring, his brother and his brother's children raised to the sacerdotal office. He puts them himself in possession of this dignity, whilst he leaves his own children, mixed in the crowd of Levites, without hopes of ever raising (1) any higher. With all these virtues how extensive his knowledge! He is a pathetick orator, a sublime poet, an exact historian, a deep politician, he unites the highest accomplishments to the noblest talents. Would you wish to know the origin of the world, the genealogies of our first parents, the settlements of ancient nations, the rise of arts? Antiquity cannot supply you with more variable and precious monuments than his writings. His philosophy is not that barren and fruitless one, whose subtilty evaporates in empty reasonings, and whose powers spend themselves in discoveries of no use to the happiness of men; it is not that disastrous philosophy, which, with an axe in its hand, and a veil over its eyes, throws down, overturns, destroys every thing, and builds up nothing; which in its impious phrenzy, makes matter its God, which distinguishes man from beast only by his shape, and, in order to improve him, sends him back into the woods to dispute for acorns with the animals that inhabit them. No, it is the wise philosophy of those good men, who first

(1) *Any higher.* Did he aspire to the legal power? No man ever had a better opportunity of doing it. This question is asked of a Deist.



formed the social state, civilized nations, and made their fellow-creatures happy, by teaching them to submit to the yoke of laws. Certainly a person of so exalted a character and so informed a mind, was able to give his people wise laws.

6thly. But Moses tells you that these laws are not his ; he is only the interpreter of that God who delivered his people ; in the name of that great God, and by commission from him, they were given to our fathers. The obligation to observe them flows from his sovereign will, which is always wise and just, and the only solid foundation of virtue ; and the sanctions of these laws are that prosperity, even temporal, which he promises to them as the reward of their obedience ; and those most dreadful scourges which he denounces against them in case of disobedience ; these sanctions no other legislator ever presumed (1) to give to his laws, but here they were verified by a wonderful series of events.

7thly. Other legislators have pretended to divine inspiration, but they were scarcely believed, even during their lives, and this belief soon vanished away. This is not the case with regard to Moses's divine legation. Our fathers believed in it, and their descendants do so still. From whence this difference ? Is it not because imposition passes away, but truth stands the test.

8thly. Hence that inviolable attachment to our laws which the law-giver has given us, an attachment without example, which the destruction of our government, the dispersion of our tribes, the persecutions of kings, and the contempt of nations, have never been able to root out of our hearts.

(1) *To give to his laws.* This is an observation of the learned Bishop Warburton, and a proof of Moses's divine legation. See the *Divine Legation of Moses.* Aut.



Thousands of Jews have given up their lives rather than renounce those laws, or appear to infringe them. In consequence of this, the Mosaic legislature is come down to us, thro' so many ages and revolutions, ever the same, and ever respectable, whilst nothing remains of so many renowned forms of government, but the names of the lawgivers affixed to some fragments of their laws. And not only the Hebrews, but two thirds of this habitable globe revere these laws, and look upon our lawgiver as divinely inspired. What human government ever had a like success?

9thly. This duration, this perpetuity of our legislature, this respect which it enjoys for so many ages, and in so many climates, cannot be the effect of chance. Can you account for it by natural means? When you shall have done this, (if to do it is possible) you will have demonstrated that the Jewish was incontestably the greatest of all human lawgivers, and that his people who are, according to you, *unworthy of the notice of a politician*, deserve to engross his attention better than any other.

10th. But no, the finger of the Lord is here, his power and wisdom shine forth too clearly here to leave any doubts.

### C O N C L U S I O N.

To conclude, sir, every part of the Jewish legislature displays the high and divine wisdom of the legislator. Its doctrines are rational and sublime; its religious and moral precepts, holy and pure; its political, military and civil laws are wise, equitable and mild; even its ritual laws are founded in reason; all of them in short, are admirably suited to the designs and views of the legislator, to the circumstances of time, place, climate, to the inclinations of the Hebrews, and to the manners of the neighbouring nations, &c. There is nothing



in this legislature that contradicts the laws of nature or of virtue. Every thing here breathes justice, piety, honesty, benevolence. Its object, its antiquity, its origin, its duration, the talents and virtues of the legislator, the respect of so many nations, all these things conspire to prove the excellence of it. (1) Your greatest men have admired it, and looked upon it as the primary source of divine and human law, and you, sir, can see nothing in it but *absurdity* and *barbarism*. When you spoke of it in such opprobrious terms, did impartiality guide your criticism?

We have thought fit, sir, to say thus much in defence of our laws. This is indeed but a poor sketch of an apology, if compared with those of so many learned christians and well-instructed Jews, Abravanel, Jarchi, Maimonides, and before them, Josephus, and the eloquent Philo. Read their writings, sir, do still a better thing, read the text of our laws, and your prejudices will soon vanquish. You will soon be struck with the excellence of these statutes, and will say to yourself perhaps not without confusion, These *statutes* however are noble, and this people whom I have so often abused, (2) is a wise and intelligent nation.

As for our parts, sir, when we consider the just censures that have been passed on ancient and modern governments; when we reflect on the baneful systems set up in ages past, and in this one too by philosophers; when we see the providence of

(1) *Your greatest men.* We might quote the chancellor who, in our memory, has done immortal honour to the kingdom of France by his knowledge and his virtues. This great man had so high a respect for the Jewish laws, he thought them so wise and good, that he got a contraction made of them, and a body of *Jewish laws* digested under proper heads. But the d'Aguesfaus, the Hospitals, the Bacons, &c. &c. are but poor lawyers, men of weak understanding, if compared with our modern philosophers! *Edit.*

(2) *A wise and intelligent nation.* See Deuteronomy, ch. 6. v. 7. *Aut.*



God, his justice, even his existence contested; fatality introduced, liberty destroyed: the landmarks of right and wrong daringly torn up, or placed with uncertainty by these pretenders to wisdom; man degraded, all the bounds of society dissolved, vain imaginations and racking doubts substituted in the place of the most comfortable and salutary truths, &c. When we see these things, our spirit is stirred up at all those errors, and we cannot help thinking ourselves happy in having been preserved from them by such reasonable and holy laws. *O Israel happy are we, for the things that are pleasing to God are made known unto us. He hath not dealt so (1) with any nation.*

We remain, &c.

(1) *With any nation.* See Baruch ch. 4. and Ps. 148.



## LETTER VI.

*The question is examined whether the Jewish law authorised and commanded human sacrifices.*

**T**O the general charges of absurdity and barbarism, which you lay on the Jewish nation, you add a particular one. If we are to believe you, this just and mild government authorized and commanded human sacrifices. This shocking calumny appears to you so well grounded, that you are perpetually upbraiding us with it. You charged us with it in your first tracts, and you repeat it in your new ones. It is to be found again in your *Toleration*; it has appeared again in your *Philosophy of History*, in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, &c. so fond are you of inculcating it on your readers, so sure you are of pleasing in the midst of the most (1) tiresome repetitions!

It must be granted, however, that altho' you have often repeated this charge, you are not the first that has laid it to us. Several English free-thinkers have mentioned it (2) before you. As you do little more than transcribe the arguments of these writers, it will be a sufficient answer here to lay before you what their learned countrymen (3) have replied.

§ 1. *It is allowed that some among the Jews have offered human sacrifices to the Gods of the Canaanites. These sacrifices condemned by the law. The law mentions them with horror.*

(1) *Tiresome repetitions.* Mr. Voltaire himself allows, that for some time he has been fond of repeating what he had said before. We frankly own ourselves not to be of the number of those who think such repetitions agreeable. *Edit.*

(2) *Before you.* See *Christianity as old as the creation* by Tindal and Morgan's *Moral Philosopher.* *Aut.*

(3) *Have replied.* See especially *Doctor Leland's answer* to the two works above-mentioned.



Such was the deplorable blindness of men for a long time, that they thought they did things acceptable to God when they offered up their fellow-creatures to him. Most nations looked upon these sacrifices as the surest means of appeasing Heaven, and averting its vengeance. This barbarous piece of superstition was spread even thro' the most polished and enlightened nations of the ancient and the new world, but it prevailed chiefly among the Canaanites. These religious cruelties, which were not practised in other places, but upon extraordinary occasions, were common amongst them. For these abominations chiefly, God had determined to cut them off, and Moses had most expressly forbid this detestable worship to his people. *Thou shalt not, (1) says he, let any of thy seed pass thro' the fire to Moloch. Defile not yourselves in any of these things, for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you. And a little lower. For whoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Moloch, he shall surely be put to death, the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Moloch, and kill him not, then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him.*

But we cannot conceal it. Notwithstanding all the precautions which the legislator took, and the prohibitions he issued, this infamous worship introduced itself amongst our ancestors, and the scripture, in many places, upbraids them bitterly with it. *They were mingled among the heathen, says (2) the Psalmist, and learned their works, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons, and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood. Go forth says the Lord*

(1) Says he. See Leviticus, ch. 28 v. 21. and ch. 20 v. 2.

(2) The Psalmist, Psalm 106. v. 37. &c.



(1) to Jeremiah, *into the valley of the son of Hinnom, and say, hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burnt incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind. Therefore behold the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter.*

You see, sir, when and to whom these Israelites, unworthy of that name, offered those abominable sacrifices. It was not to their God. It happened when they were forsaking him for strange Gods, or when, in contempt of the law, they mixed the impure rites of idolatrous worship with the service which the law prescribes. But you see also what horror Moses and the prophets inspired them with, for these shocking practices.

§ 2. *That the Jewish law, so far from commanding or approving the offering such sacrifices to God, expressly forbad it.*

You tell us however with an air of confidence, which you know how to assume, but which now no longer deceives any one, that altho' the Jewish law condemns sacrifices of human blood, offered by the Jews to the Gods of the Canaanites, yet it commands them to offer such to their own God; *that such sacrifices are clearly ordained by the laws of this detestable people, and that there is no point of history better ascertained.*

We must own it, sir, these expressions of *detestable, execrable people*, always surprize us in your writ-

(1) To Jeremiah. Ch. 19. v. 2. &c.



ings. We think that these angry epithets ought not to be found in the works of a polite writer, and an humane and tender philosopher. Pray is this conformable to French politeness? Is this the moderation which the spirit of philosophy inspires you with?

However, let us say no more concerning abuse, let us answer your charge, and see whether your confident assertions have, I will not say certainty, but even the shadow of probability.

1st. If we are not mistaken, it is hard to read the passages we have quoted, and especially these words of Jeremiah, *things which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind*, without seeing that it is not only the destination, but the barbarity of those sacrifices which the law censures, and the prophets condemn.

2dly. If the God of the Jews had approved of such sacrifices, would he have stopped the hand of Abraham, who was offering up his son to him? Satisfied with this trial of his servant's faith and obedience, he forbids him to stretch his arm over so dear a victim, and substitutes another into its place. Does not this conduct, at a time when, according to you, the Canaanites were beginning to sacrifice their children to their divinities, shew that the God of Abraham did not resemble the gods of these idolaters, who delighted to see innocent blood flowing. The refusal of this victim, in these circumstances, was doubtless a striking lesson, by which God, whilst he made a trial of Abraham's faith, meant to give a perpetual lesson to this holy man and to his posterity, of his abhorrence of these barbarous superstitions.

3dly. If these sacrifices had been prescribed or approved by the law, would it have been so difficult to find examples of them? And how could they be so uncommon? How happens it that so many holy men, so many pious kings, David, Josias, Aza, Josaphat, Hezekias, &c. never offered such sacrifices, if the law prescribed and authorized them, and never had recourse to so powerful an engine for ob-



taining God's assistance in those perilous circumstances, to which some of them were reduced? Is there not great reason to believe, that if these sacrifices had been permitted, they would have been more common? We may judge of this by other nations.

4thly. The Jewish law enters into the most minute detail with respect to sacrifices; it points out what kinds of quadrupeds and birds might be offered unto the Lord, their qualities, the times and circumstances in which they were to be offered, the manner of preparing them for sacrifice, the ceremonies which ought to accompany it, &c. If then this law had ordered men to be sacrificed, if it had looked on human victims as the most acceptable offerings unto the Lord, is it possible that it should have prescribed nothing with regard to the rites and ceremonies belonging to these sacrifices? Would it not have determined what persons might and should be offered up? On what occasions and in what manner this was to be done? Yet there is no account of this, not one regulation with regard to these objects. We dare affirm it, sir, this silence of the law is a demonstration that it neither required nor approved these bloody sacrifices.

5thly, But this is not all. The Jewish law expressly forbids offering such sacrifices to the Lord. This passage may be found in the 42d chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 29th and 30th. Thus we read, *When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations, (the Canaanites) from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their lands, Take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee, and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, how did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise, thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God, for every abomination unto the Lord which he hateth, have they done unto their gods, for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in the fire to*



*their gods.* It is clear that God in this place, not only forbids his people to honour the gods of the Canaanites, but to imitate the manner in which they honoured them. He plainly declares that these sacrifices of their sons and daughters, are rites abominable in his eyes, a worship which he abhors and detests. *Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God, what things soever I command you observe to do it, thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from it.* Truly, sir, after so clear a prohibition, added to all the former reflexions, to believe or maintain that the Jewish law commanded or authorised human sacrifices, is voluntary blindness, and a struggle against evidence.

§ 3. *Objection drawn from Leviticus, ch. 27. v. 29. answered.*

Yet you make an objection which must be answered. *The book of Leviticus, you say, in (1) v. 27. of ch. 29. expressly forbids redeeming those who have been devoted, it says these very words, they must die, (Premiers Melanges.)* And in another place you affirm, that *it was expressly ordered by the Jewish law to sacrifice men devoted to the Lord. No man devoted shall be redeemed, but shall surely be put to death.* The Vulgate renders it, *non redimetur, sed morte morietur.* Philosoph. Dict. Art. Jephtha.

But since it is certain, as we have shewn, that the Jewish law, so far from requiring or approving human sacrifices, clearly prohibited them, there is strong reason to believe that the passage of Leviticus which you quote, is susceptible of a different meaning from what you give it, and this meaning is obvious.

If you had taken the trouble of reading with attention, and in the original, this chapter of Leviticus, you would have seen, sir, that in the first part of it, it speaks of the *Neder* or simple vow, after which it was lawful to redeem what was vowed unto

§ f

(1) 27 v 29th ch. It should be 29th v. of 27th ch. for the book of Leviticus has not 29 chapters. This is a typographical error, which must be corrected in the new edition of Mr. Voltaire's works. *Edit.*



the Lord, and that in the 28th verse it speaks of the *Cherem* a particular and voluntary vow.

The *Cherem* was a vow of indispensable obligation. It was an irrevocable act of devoting, accompanied with an oath, an absolute consecration and without return, by which a person gave up to the Lord all his rights to a certain thing. Every Israelite might thus devote his property, *quæ habet, quæ illius sunt*. His house, his lands, his cattle, his slaves, &c. and the things thus devoted could not be redeemed for any price whatsoever. Unclean animals were sold for the benefit of the sanctuary, and such as were clean were offered up. The lands, the houses, which could not be offered up, remained the property of the temple and of its ministers. The men, that is children and slaves, for these were the only persons that belonged to the father of the family, and the only ones he could devote, were not sacrificed; they were consecrated to the Lord, and employed during their whole lives, in the service of the temple and of the priests. In this sense all the Jewish writers, who in all probability understand their laws, explain this 28th verse.

But in the 29th verse which you quote by itself, and on which you lay the greatest stress this *Cherem*, *particular and voluntary vow*, is no longer concerned. This verse relates only to those things and persons which are devoted to destruction by the *penal Cherem*, or *solemn anathema*, denounced by publick authority. Such were the Canaanites, devoted by God himself to destruction, as a punishment for their detestable abominations. And the inhabitants of Jericho have this solemn anathema pronounced against them in the 6th chapter of Joshua, 17th and 18th verses. It is also pronounced in the 32d chapter of Exodus, and 13th of Deuteronomy, against every individual and city of Israel, which should fall into idolatry, and offer sacrifice to any other God but the Lord. We see another example of it in the book of



Judges, ch. 21. v. 5. where the congregation of the people of Israel is laid under this anathema, and engaged to put all those to death who would not meet at Masphat to fight against the Benjamites. And in consequence of this anathema, the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, who did not go to the place appointed, were all smote with the edge of the sword. All persons thus devoted were to be cut off as execrable and accursed. No ransom of whatsoever value, could be accepted for them. They were put to death without mercy, but they were not sacrificed. The punishment of death and sacrifice are different things. There is some difference between these ideas. The confounding of them implies ignorance or dishonesty.

This chapter of Leviticus is to be taken in this sense according to the opinion of all our ancient and modern writers, and their unanimous consent ought, we think, to be of some weight, at least when the knowledge of our laws and customs is in question.

This interpretation, which you see is not new, reconciles this whole passage of Leviticus perfectly well with that horror which the scripture breaths every where against homicide in general, and against religious murders in particular, and with the very clear and express prohibitions which we have quoted out of Deuteronomy. It has besides the advantage of being conformable to the constant practice of the Jewish nation, in which there is no instance of a master sacrificing his slaves to the Lord, or of a father his children, except perhaps that of Jephtha, of which we shall say a few words here.

§ 4. *Of Jephtha. Whether he really offered up his daughter, and whether this sacrifice, supposing it real, was according to the spirit of the law.*

You begin, sir, by deciding the question. *It appears clearly, you say, in the treatise on Toleration, by the text of scripture that Jephtha sacrificed his daughter.* To which you add in the Philosophical Dictionary. *It is evident by the text of the book of Judges,*



that Jephtha promised to sacrifice the first person who should go out of his house to wish him joy of his victory. His only daughter met him; he tore off his garments and sacrificed her, after having permitted her to go and weep on the mountains the misfortune of dying a maid. I stand to the text, Jephtha devoted his daughter as an whole burnt offering, and he offered her up.

If you stand to the text you are right, sir. Nothing remains but to know whether you understand it well. But when you say that Jephtha promised to sacrifice *the first person who should go out of his house to wish him joy of his victory*, and that he permitted his daughter to go and weep on the mountains *for the misfortune of dying a maid*, is this standing to the text, or accommodating it to your own ideas? Where do you find in the text this *wishing joy* and *this misfortune of dying a maid*? Others can see nothing in it but a vow to sacrifice, not *the first person*, but *the first thing that should present itself when he entered his house*; and the permission given to the girl is this, *to go and bewail her virginity*, and not *the misfortune of dying a maid*. These expressions are not quite of the same import. Your's decide the question, those of the text leave it undetermined.

And here, what appears to you *evident and certain by the text*, has appeared very doubtful to many learned men, Jews (1) and christians. They think, on the contrary, and with good reason, that Jephtha's daughter was never really sacrificed, but only consecrated to the service of the tabernacle in perpetual virginity; and that this consecration, this necessity of passing her days in celibacy, a state most humbling in the sight of all Jewish women, compelled her to go and weep upon the mountains, and

(1) *And christians*. See among others, what the learned commentators on the English Bible, and on the Universal History, have said on this subject. Add to these Grotius, Le Clerc, Father Houbigeant, a new dissertation lately given by Mr. Baver, but especially Schult, who has collected the best things that have been said in favour of the consecration of Jephtha's daughter to celibacy. *Aut.*



drew tears from her unhappy father, who by this was deprived of all hopes of seeing any offspring from his darling child.

However, sir, if we did allow that this sacrifice was real, as many of our writers ancient and modern have supposed, would it follow from this, that it was according to the spirit of the law? Jephtha might think himself obliged to offer it, but was Jephtha infallible? Might he not have been led astray by a zeal without understanding, by a scrupulous and erroneous attachment to his imprudent vow? Is it by the example of a single fallible man, or by the constant practice of a nation, and by the very text of the law, that the sense of this law is to be ascertained? If Jephtha acted only in obedience to a clear and known law, if this vow flowed from zeal and piety, and the execution of it proceeded from a laudable firmness, how comes it that it never had any imitators? Why did not the inspired writers in any place praise this action, or propose it as a model? In this case would St. Austin, and almost all the fathers of the church, have censured, it as you say they have done? And would all those writers ancient and modern, who have believed the sacrifice to be real, joined with Josephus in saying, *that it was neither conformable to the law, nor agreeable to God.*

But the scripture says, that *Jephtha was filled with the spirit of God, and St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, praises Jephtha, and places him with Samuel and David.* (Toleration, article, *if intolerance, &c.*)

Yes, sir, the scripture says that Jephtha was filled with the spirit of God; but it does not say any where that this happened when he devoted his daughter and fulfilled his vow. And it appears to us that christians prove satisfactorily, that if St. Paul places Jephtha in the list of the heroes of Israel, it is not on account of this sacrifice, of which he does not speak, altho' he mentions that of Abraham.

But you add again, *St. Jerom, in his epistle to Julian, says, Jephtha offered up his daughter to the Lord,*



and on account of this, the apostle places him in the list of saints. God, says don Calmet, does not approve these vows, but when they are made he will have them executed, were it only to punish those who make them. Ibidem.

St. Jerom, sir, was one of the most learned men of his time; he understood our language, our history, our geography, &c. But we do not take him for an infallible authority, even among christians, nor Don Calmet neither. However, when St. Jerom said that Jephtha was accounted a saint for sacrificing his daughter, he also said, that it was not the offering, but the intention of the offerer which was pleasing to the Lord, *Non sacrificium placet, sed animus offerentis*. This is the observation of Don Calmet, to whom you are indebted for the quotation out of the epistle to Julian, which you probably never read.

Since then it is not certain that Jephtha's sacrifice was real, and that even if it was real, it does not appear to have been conformable to the law; this example proves nothing in favour of your hypothesis. The others which you produce are as weak.

§ 5. *Other pretended examples of human sacrifices. Of Agag, of the thirty two thousand Madianite women, of Jonathan, &c.*

You look upon the death of Agag, sir, as a consequence of the Levitical law. *It was* you say, (Treatise of Toleration, and in other places, for this charge is often repeated) *in virtue of this law, that Samuel cut Agag in pieces, whom Saul had pardoned, and it was even for having spared Agag that Saul was reproved of the Lord.*

You are right, sir, but since the law was so express, was not Saul wrong in transgressing it? We must observe however that Agag, who lay under the anathema pronounced against the Amalekites, as be-



ing one of them, was put to death for another reason besides, for his personal cruelty. *As thy sword, says Samuel, when he is putting him to death, hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.* What reason then could there be for any tenderness towards this barbarous man?

You conclude from his death, *that the Jews offered up human victims, witness, you say, king Agag cut in pieces.* In reality, we may look on the death of Agag as a real sacrifice. In this fatal scene we see a vow, a priest, a victim, it was therefore a true sacrifice. (Treatise of Toleration.)

No, sir, *Agag cut in pieces*, does not prove *that the Jews offered human sacrifices to God.* He is put to death, not sacrificed. And to say that we perceive here a priest, a victim, &c. and that it was therefore a true sacrifice, is a play of words. By a stratagem unworthy of you, and which can scarcely mislead any one, you conclude from the figurative signification of a word to the proper one.

There is not more truth in what you say, (Philosophy of History, article, Human Victims) speaking of the Madianites, that *Moses commanded all the males to be put to death, but the females to be preserved, of which thirty-two only were offered unto the Lord.* And (Treatise of Toleration) you say, *that many commentators assert that thirty-two girls were offered unto the Lord,* Cesserunt in partem Domini triginta duæ animæ.

These thirty-two girls werethat part of the spoil which was reserved for the Lord. They were intended to serve in his tabernacle as slaves, therefore they were not sacrificed. If many commentators assert that they were sacrificed, they assert it falsely. The text does not say it, or rather it implies quite the contrary. Believe us, sir, keep to the text.

But farther you say, (Premiers Melanges) that *in obedience to this law, the Levitical law, Saul wanted to*



*offer up his son. The first Jewish king offered up men. He swore he would offer up unto the Lord the man that should eat. Luckily the nation was wiser than him, and would not suffer the king's son to be sacrificed, for having eaten a little honey.*

*The first Jewish king offered up men!* What men did he sacrifice? When and where? Be so good as to inform your readers. What a notion must we form of you, sir, when we hear you affirming coolly such palpable falsehoods! Altho' you have no respect for posterity or the present generation, yet reverence yourself.

*He swore to offer unto the Lord the man that should eat.* No, sir, he did not do this. He prohibited eating, and swore to put any one to death, who should transgress this order. Jonathan would have been put to death for having disobeyed the order of his general, and having incurred by his disobedience that curse, that punishment which had been just denounced, but he would not have been sacrificed to the Lord. To be punished capitally is not to be sacrificed. When your kings engage by oath never to pardon duellists, and that in consequence of this, such offenders are put to death, is this a sacrifice offered unto the Lord?

§ 6. *Whether it is a dispute of words, that the Jews sacrificed men to the divinity or not.*

Lastly, we read the following extraordinary reasoning in your *Melanges*. "Learned men have canvassed this question, whether the Jews really sacrificed men to God, as so many other nations did. This is a verbal dispute. Those whom this nation devoted, were not slaughtered on an altar with religious rites, but notwithstanding they were really offered up."

*If learned men have canvassed this question,* it is a proof that they have sometimes canvassed very ridiculous ones. They must have known how much the Jewish law condemned these practices of idola-



ters, and this was sufficient to persuade them that the law never prescribed these sacrifices.

*It is a dispute about words.* If it is so, and you look upon it as such, why do you return to it so often? Why do you repeat it over and over to us in so many different ways? A dispute about words ought not to engage so much of your attention.

But again, how do you prove that this is a verbal dispute? *Those whom this nation devoted, you say, were not slaughtered on an altar with religious rites.* True, sir, but you do not say all? add to this that they never were offered up to the divinity, and consequently that these were not real sacrifices. Otherwise we must suppose, that every enemy, every rebellious citizen killed in a city taken by storm, is sacrificed to God. What a number of sacrifices then must have been offered up on the single night of St. Bartholemew!

But you say, *notwithstanding they were really offered up*, that is, they were killed, still you play upon words.

We conclude by repeating, sir, that in the 29th verse of 27th chap. of Leviticus, no sacrifices are meant, but dreadful punishment, notorious vengeance. Those who were devoted by publick authority were put to death, but they were not offered up. In languages there is a proper name for every thing; he who calls that an offering and a sacrifice, which others call penalty of death and military execution, is guilty of an evident abuse of words, and of an arbitrary confusion of ideas.

No one disputes but human sacrifices were common among the Canaanites, Egyptians, Carthaginians, Romans, &c. History informs us of this; innumerable testimonies of weight confirm it. There were ceremonies and appointed times for these barbarous acts; government and religion equally tolerated them; inhuman priests slaughtered these unhappy victims; their blood flowed upon the altars, and the



people offered them up unto their gods as the fittest oblation for meriting their favour and averting their vengeance. Such instances should have been pointed out in the history of our fathers; then you would have been believed; but an ill-interpreted text and a childish equivocation are not sufficient authorities for charging them with so detestable a crime, which they went to punish in the people of Canaan, a worship which their law clearly forbids, and of which you scarcely find one example in all their annals, and that too condemned by those who acknowledge it, and which has not been followed by any one of the nation.

Yes, sir, so far from thinking that our law prescribes or approves those barbarous usages, any one who is the least acquainted with our history and laws, will confess, that the abolition of these horrid rites is owing to our religion, and to the others which sprang from it. And you, a learned writer and impartial philosopher, come and accuse our fathers of this practice! Truly you must be very sure of your readers, since you are not afraid least the manifest falsehood of these charges should give them a bad opinion of your knowledge or your ability.

We are, &c.



*Letter from JOSEPH BEN JONATHAN to DAVID WINKER, concerning the following short commentary.*

Dear DAVID,

I Recieved the new extracts of our friend *Aaron's* work which you sent me. I have translated them, and published them under the form of a commentary as well as the former.

This form seems to have generally pleased ; and indeed it has some advantages. Besides its causing variety, it presents the difficulties to the reader in a more distinct manner, and expressed in the very words of the author. The answers follow, and if they are satisfactory, they are more easily apprehended in this way.

Besides, as I told you before, commentaries are coming again into fashion, with this difference however, that the commentators of this age are very far from being enamoured with their text. If *Aaron* does not love his, no one will have reason to be surprized ; it is the fashion of the times. If any one should complain of this, he can shelter himself under great authorities, you understand me, and what is still better, under good reasons.

Adieu, present our worthy friend my best wishes for his prosperity, and believe me sincerely and tenderly,

Your's &c.



## A SHORT COMMENTARY

EXTRACTED FROM A GREATER.

*For the use of Mr. VOLTAIRE, and of those who read  
his works.*

### FIRST EXTRACT.

*Of Abraham, whether he ever existed. Who he was.*

**L**IKE all great men, sir, you are born to rule the age you live in, and to reform all its prejudices. The title of commentator was become (1) the lowest in literature. You have deigned to take it up; it is now ennobled, people on every side flock to assume it after you. Happy the man that can sustain it with like talents and success!

By your comments on the great Corneille, on the excellent author of the Treatise on Crimes and Punishments, &c. you have done honour to their works, and stamped an additional value on them. Might we expect by commenting on your's, to have the happiness of contributing to their perfection? This desire at least, we may say, animates us, and after the defence of our sacred writings, it is our principal object.

And therefore we shall not spend time in extolling the beauties that shine forth in every part of your writings. Unhappy they indeed who want the help of a commentator to perceive them! We think to contribute more effectually to your credit, by laying before you those little inaccuracies which you have

(1) *The lowest in literature.* This was Pope's opinion. "From an author," he says, "I became a translator, from a translator, a commentator, I shall soon be nothing at all," *Edit.*



fallen into, on subjects which interest us, and of which you sometimes speak, without having sufficiently dived into them.

We hope, sir, that you will look favourably on this our zeal. You have too great a regard for truth to be offended at those who shew it to you with all that deference and respect which are due to you. Let us then begin by the history of Abraham.

§ 1. *Whether the history of Abraham is certain, and whether the Jews descend from this patriarch.*

The Jews boast of their descent from Abraham; this descent is their glory, which you want to rob them of. With a view to this, you begin your critical enquiries on this patriarch, by comparing his history to those fables which are told of some famous characters of antiquity.

TEXT. "Abraham is one of those names famous in Asia Minor and Arabia, like Thaut among the Egyptians, Zoroaster among the Persians, &c. people better known by their celebrity, than by well-attested history, (Philosoph. Dict. art. Abraham.)"

COMMENT. The history of Thaut, Zoroaster, &c. are indeed not the best attested. Of these famous names we scarcely know any thing but uncertain facts, dubious dates, false or contradictory accounts.

But sincerely, do you really believe, sir, that Abraham is not better known to us? Must we remind you that we have his history connected and particular, written by an historian who was near his time, and whose great-grand-father lived above thirty years with this patriarch's grandson?

In this history, the exact and impartial historian informs us of the origin and native country of this great man, of his travels, his virtues and failings. He there points out to the Hebrews, who were returning into the country which Abraham had inha-



bited, the places where the patriarch, his son and grandson had resided, the altars they had built, the wells they had dug, the lands which they had acquired, the kings and nations with whom they had dealings or alliances. He enters into the same particulars on the various places which his twelve great-grandsons had rendered famous by their adventures or their crimes. Is this the way in which men generally speak of a fabulous person?

As a proof of their descent from this patriarch, the Jews produce their genealogies, which are looked upon among them as authentic genealogies, on which were founded not only the hope and common right of the nation to the possession of the land of Canaan, but also the respective rights of each tribe, and of every individual in each tribe. Tell us, sir, what ancient family can produce titles so incontestible of their descent.

But this is not all; the Jews are not the only people who claim the title of Abraham's descendants; the Ishmaelite-Arabians boast of it too. Thus two nations, according to you, *so different, that if we judge of them by the examples of our modern histories, it would be hard to conceive that they could have the same origin*; two nations ever jealous, ever enemies of each other, so far from mutually disputing this common descent, join in attesting it to the whole earth, and both of them bear in their flesh the proof and stamp of it.

The testimony of these two nations, altho' strong in itself, is yet confirmed by that of two other nations, who are also neighbours and enemies, the Moabites and Ammonites, who say they descend from the nephew of Abraham; and it is also confirmed by the nations of Canaan, who by the name of Hebrews, which they gave to our fathers, declared them strangers to their country, and originally coming from beyond the Euphrates.



In short, the God whom the Jews worshipped, the religion which they professed, the land which they lived on, the monuments which they had before their eyes, their traditions, their scriptures, every thing announced Abraham. If after this number of proofs, the existence of the patriarch, and the descent of the Jews are not well-attested facts, there is not a well-attested fact in all ancient history. And yet you say confidently,

TEXT. "The Jews boast of their descent from Abraham, as the Franks do from Hector, and the Britons from Tubal." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Probably then the Franks and Britons have their genealogies also; their religion, government, the common and respective rights of the cities, and of private persons, every thing among them tends to this point; every thing supposes and demonstrates this descent? Their neighbours, their enemies agree in it; their writers attest it, and monuments of every kind confirm this testimony.

Truly, sir, one is apt to lose all patience, who considers that multitude of connected facts which establish the descent of the Jews, and then hears a celebrated writer coolly comparing these incontestible titles to the vain pretensions of the Franks and the Britons. However let us not be too hasty, but listen without passion to your extraordinary arguments on this head.

§ 2. *Traditions of the Arabians concerning Abraham; whether they destroy the testimony of the Jewish writers.*

In order to cast a doubt on the history of Abraham, you mix some Arabian fables with the accounts of our sacred writings, and feigning merely to attack these fabulous traditions, you say,

TEXT. "I speak here only of prophane history, for we have such deference for the Jewish history as we ought to have. We are only speaking to the



“Arabians.” (Philosophical Dictionary, article Abraham.)

COMMENT. You are only speaking to the Arabians! We understand you, sir, what need of dissimulation? You enjoy this long time the noble privilege of saying whatever comes into your head. Take off the mask, and attack us without disguise.

TEXT. “They tell us that he (Abraham) was the son of a potter, that he built Mecca and died there.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Altho’ the Arabians say that Abraham was the son of a potter, yet Genesis does not say it. You might have spared yourself the trouble of ascribing this to it (1) as you do. A critick of your reputation should be a little more exact, sir.

*The Arabians tell us, &c.* What Arabians? Is it the ancient? You have not their books. Is it the modern Arabians? But the modern, who are posterior to Moses by 2000 years, are writers without critical knowledge or taste, and exceedingly ignorant of every thing that preceded the Hegira. You allow this yourself, and you leave pure springs, to go and draw out of those muddy waters! Do you oppose such authorities to that of a judicious writer, well-instructed, and who lived nearly at the same time?

*The Arabians say that Abraham built Mecca.* Well, sir, what matters it whether they say it or not? Or what are these Arabian fables to us? Does it follow that because the Arabians make Abraham the builder of Mecca, the existence of the patriarch is doubtful, and the descent of the Jews uncertain? Must well-attested facts be denied, because ignorant writers have, so many ages after, mixed fabulous stories with them.

§ 3. *Traditions of the Persians concerning Abraham; whether the books in which the Persians speak of this patriarch are prior to those of the Jews.*

(1) *As you do.* See Philosophical Dictionary. (Article Abraham.)



From the Arabian traditions you go to those of the Persians, and you would almost make us believe that Abraham was a Persian.

TEXT. "Probably the Jewish nation knew the name of Abraham only thro' the Babylonians." (Ibid.)

COMMENT. *Probably.* Thus you oppose probabilities and conjectures to a multitude of facts, to monuments, to traditions, to history, to the records of a nation, even to the testimony of its enemies, &c. ! And what sort of probabilities too !

*They knew the name of Abraham only thro' the Babylonians.* What is your meaning here, sir ? Is it that Abraham was a Caldean ? Our writings attest it and we believe it. Or that our fathers were not acquainted with that name until after they removed to Babylon ? This assertion requires proofs, produce yours.

TEXT. "This name of Bram, Abram, Ibrahim, was famous in Persia." (Ibid.)

COMMENT. Yes, but when did it begin to be famous there ? Was it before the Hebrews were acquainted with it ? Or was it after they were spread thro' Persia, and gave this name celebrity there ? You should have cleared that up. Perhaps you are going to do it.

TEXT. "The Persians pretended that this Abraham, or Ibrahim, was from the country of Bactria, and that he lived near the city of Balc." (Philosophy of History, Article Abraham.)

COMMENT. But did they pretend this before the times in which the Jews place the birth of Abraham ?

TEXT. "In him they respected a prophet of the religion of Zoroaster." (Ibid.)

COMMENT. They might have done more, for according to you.

TEXT. "Many learned men pretend that he was the same lawgiver whom the Greeks call Zoroaster." (Philosophical Dictionary.)



COMMENT. *Many learned men.* Why do you not name them? We have always an ill opinion of these vague quotations, and, you know, with good reason. Pray, sir, name these learned men, and then we shall see what respect is due to their authority.

*Pretend that he was the same lawgiver, &c.* But do these learned men acknowledge only one Zoroaster; or more than one? At what period do they place them? This date is of consequence; we require it from you, and you do not fix it.

(1) Many learned men, sir, ancient and modern, distinguish two Zoroasters; one who lived under Darius, the son of Hytaspes, and was consequently many centuries posterior to the father of the faithful. The other is of uncertain date, but some of the learned place him five or six hundred years before Darius, and others farther back still.

If your learned men speak of that Zoroaster who was a cotemporary of Darius, the period is too recent to prove any thing against our writings. And if it be the ancient Zoroaster whom they confound with Abraham, permit us to ask you on what foundation they do it.

TEXT. "The ancient religion of all the nations from the Euphrates to the Oxus, was called *Kish Ibrahim, Millat Ibrahim.*" (Ibid.)

COMMENT. *The ancient religion.* This expression is very vague, sir, it would have been proper to determine the extent of it.

Some learned men, sir, and among others, the learned Hyde, Prideaux, Pocock, &c. distinguish two ancient religions of the Persians; the one before, the other under Zoroaster the cotemporary of Darius, who, they say, reformed the ancient worship of fire, and taught the Persians to acknowledge but one God, the creator and governor of the world,

(1) *Many learned men, ancient, &c.* See *Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres*, vol. 28, *Aut.*



and to pay their homage to him. We shall willingly grant that this reformation was called *Kish Ibrahim*, *Millat Ibrahim*; but that the ancient religion of these nations, the religion that was professed before Abraham was known by the Hebrews, was called *Kish Ibrahim*, is what ought to be proved, and what, we give you notice, you will find it hard to prove. But yet you say,

*Text.* “ This is confirmed by all the enquiries made on the spot by the learned Hyde.” (Ibid.)

Have you read Hyde, sir, We never make bets; but the chances are that you have not.

No, sir, you have not read Hyde; if you had, you would have taken care not to bring him in. You are too fond of truth, sir, and too cunning.

We have not now the work of this learned man before us; but we have it present enough in our minds, to be able to assure you, that the learned Hyde is of a quite different opinion from you, and that he is so far from believing that the Persian traditions and writings invalidate the accounts given of Abraham in the scriptures, that he thinks those traditions and writings confirm them.

Hyde does indeed say, that *by his enquiries made on the spot*, it appears that the ancient religion of the Persians, the religion of Zoroaster, was called *Kish Ibrahim*, *Millat Ibrahim*; but, sir, the learned Hyde acknowledges only one Zoroaster, the cotemporary of the son of Hyftaspes, who was posterior to the removal of the Jewish nation to Babylon; he assures us, that this Zoroaster had been instructed in the Jewish religion, that he was acquainted with their doctrines, and had improved himself by their writings; that most of the Persian writers agree in this, and that agreeably to this persuasion, they call their religion *the religion of Abraham*.

Such is the opinion of the learned Hyde; and you, sir, who quote Hyde and rest on his authority, come and tell us, that the Jews borrowed their religion from the Persians, their laws also, and the



name of their patriarch ; and that *the small Jewish nation, which is of very late date, had no doctrines nor fixed religion ; in a word, did not know how to write until after its removal into Babylon !* Between ourselves be it said, sir, this is carrying the abuse of a great name very far.

Instead of Hyde, whom probably you never read, and who is really neither an easy nor a pleasing writer, open the learned memoirs of l'Abbe Foucher on the religion of (1) the ancient Persians ; and you will find that he speaks nearly in the same terms with Hyde. He distinguishes, it is true, and this is an happy idea, two Zoroasters, of which he thinks the cotemporary of Darius was the second. But upon the whole he believes with Pocock, Reland, Prideaux, and the oriental writers mentioned by Hyde, that this Zoroaster was a Jew, and had been a disciple of Daniel, or of some other of those illustrious Hebrews who were raised to the highest employments by the kings of Persia ; that from a Jew he became chief of the Magi, that he reformed the Persian religion according to that of his ancestors ; that with this view he gave a sublimer sense to the worship of fire, announced the unity of God, the necessity of worshipping him only, &c.

He adds, that this cunning impostor, after having carefully collected what remained of the books of the ancient Zoroaster, and what was known of him by tradition, compiled the whole, having added much of his own, and published it under the name of the ancient Zoroaster ; that not being satisfied with the credit he acquired by this great name, he wrote some books under the title of Abraham, in order to shew that this patriarch, who was then so highly revered in the east, had been one of the great partizans of the religion of fire, when understood according to his explanation ; that from thence this religion was called *Kish Ibrahim, Millat Ibrahim*.

(1) *The ancient Persians*. See the Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres, vol. 27.



And this learned academician gives us a proof, with Prideaux, Reland, Pocock, Hyde, &c. that the books of Zoroaster, those very books with which you have often upbraided us in a triumphant manner, were written by a Jew, or by a person well acquainted with the Jewish religion; it is this, we see a striking conformity between those writings and ours; not only some laws are found in them very similar to those of Moses on the distinction of animals, clean and unclean, the keeping the sacred fire up, the payment of tythes, the conservation of the priesthood in the same family, the consecration of the chief magi, &c. but besides, the author uses in many places the thoughts and words of our scriptures; he partly copies the psalms of David, he relates the history of the creation nearly in the same terms with Genesis, he speaks of Adam, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Solomon, almost in the same manner that our sacred writers do.

This is the information, sir, which l'Abbé Foucher can give you; and he has (1) already taught you something, if you have taken the pains to read the last volumes of the memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres.

(1) *Already taught you something.* The following note is at the bottom of one of l'Abbe Foucher's Memoirs: "Mr. Voltaire, by a very extraordinary mistake, transforms the title of a book into a man. (This work is called, *Sadder*.) Zoroaster, he says, in the writings preserved by Sadder, feigns that God, &c. The author of the *Sadder* is only known under the name of Me'ichscab. Besides, this Magi did not preserve the writings of Zoroaster, but pretended to give an abridgement of them. I would venture to lay a wager that Mr. Voltaire never read the *Sadder*, nor Mr. Hyde's book."

Since this l'Abbe Foucher's remark, Mr. Voltaire has spoke with more exactness of the *Sadder*. There is consequently great reason to believe that l'Abbe Foucher has taught him, that the *Sadder* was a *poem* and not a *man*. But the illustrious writer will not allow that he is obliged to the learned academician for this information; he denies his having made this mistake. It would have been more honourable to own it, and thank l'Abbe Foucher for rectifying it. Voltaire may be a man of honour, and a great man too, without understanding the Persian language, and being acquainted with the *Sadder*; but however some thanks are due to those who instruct us. *Aut.*

It is certainly with relation to this mistake of Mr. Voltaire, that we read the following words in a work called, *Defence of the Books of the Old Testament*. "At least the philosopher knows now that the *Sadder* is a book. I believe he did not know so much some years ago." Mr. Voltaire's answer to l'Abbe Foucher's note, has given no satisfaction to any one. A droll answer is no proof. *Edit.*



But perhaps you prefer to the opinions of Hyde, Prideaux, and l'Abbe Foucher, that of the bold and industrious academician who travelled into Judea, into the midst of the Perfes, and who after having studied amongst them their ancient language, has translated into your language the so much extolled Zend-Avesta, which he has lately published. But this learned man, sir, is not more favourable to you, than those we have just named.

Indeed Mr. Anquetil does not think that Zoroaster was a Jew, or that he borrowed his doctrines of the Jews; he believes him a Persian by birth, and a descendant of the ancient kings of that country; but he represents him to us as going from Irak to Babylon to study mathematicks, astronomy, all the sciences, and then teaching them in that capital, where he had Pythagoras for a disciple. He represents him to us, as “informing himself of doctrines ’till then (1) unknown to him, as transported at the sight of those traditions which instruct him in the origin of the human race, and in the cause of all those evils which oppress it.” Now at what time was Zoroaster engaged in these enquiries? At a time, says Anquetil, when *the Jews were well known in Persia*. And let us add on our side, at a time when the prophecies of Isaiah, which were shewn to Cyrus, the ordinances of that prince and of his successors in favour of the Jews and of their religion, the reputation, the knowledge, the interest of many amongst them, who were seen in the first employments, must have spread the knowledge of their doctrines and their laws, the history and the names of their patriarchs through all the provinces, and especially thro’ the capital of the empire.

(1) *Unknown to him.* These doctrines, says Mr. Anquetil, were ascribed to Heomo. But who was Heomo? An ancient legislator of the Persians! Is it probable that a Persian, of the birth and talents of Zoroaster, was obliged at the age of thirty, to go to Chaldea to learn the great articles of the ancient legislator of the Persians? Was Heomo, Abraham? That this patriarch, when he was quitting Chaldea, taught there the principles of the existence, unity of God, &c. is what all the Arabian and Persian writers hold. But this opinion does not invalidate the Jewish monuments, nor what they relate of Abrahams: quite the contrary. *Aut.*



This learned academician does not admit either, so great a conformity between our books and Zoroaster's, as Pocock, Prideaux, l'Abbe Foucher, the authors quoted by Hyde, &c. but besides that, Mr. Anquetil allows that the Zend-Avesta does not contain all the works of the Persian law giver, and that the oriental writers quoted by Hyde, may have seen some of them in Persia that were not known in India; this learned man does not deny that there is some conformity even between those books which he has translated and ours. There are indeed some (1) prayers, (2) laws and doctrines very similar to ours. There is a Supreme Being, Eternal Creator of the world, and the origin of all other beings, a single man and woman, first parents of the human race, their temptation, their fall, the great serpent their enemy and the enemy of all their posterity, &c. Ormusd says in it, "*I am*, a word of light, O Zoroaster, which I command you to announce to the whole world."

If this clear conformity of expressions, laws and doctrines, is but the effect of chance, or as Mr. Anquetil thinks, a consequence of the ancient traditions of mankind, it certainly does not prove that the Persian legislator borrowed his laws and doctrines from the Jews; but for the very same reason it cannot prove that the Jews borrowed their's from the Persians. Thus, sir, all the little arguments which you have drawn, sometimes from the conformity of our laws and doctrines with those of the Persians, and from the names of *Ibrahim*, *Kish Ibrahim*, &c. will fall to the ground under the reasonings of Anquetil, as well as Hyde, Prideaux, l'Abbe Foucher, &c.

(1) *Prayers*. One of them begins thus, "I implore thee, almighty Ormusd, let my cry come unto thine ear, let my voice reach thee." *Act.*

(2) *Laws*. Such are, those amongst others quoted above on the conservation on fire, &c. and those respecting women in their menstruous seasons. They are reckoned by these laws unclean, every thing that they touch is unclean, they are to be confined in a separate apartment, the husband is forbidden under pain of death to have any communication with his wife. In a word they almost are the same with the Levitical laws, and the slight differences which appear, they plainly on which side stand superstition and the co-  
y. *Act.*



But further, sir, observe how well you agree with the learned man of whom we are speaking. You give us the Zend-Avesta for *one of the most ancient books known upon earth*; you go still further, and call it the *most ancient book* in another place; and Mr. Anquetil, whose interest it would be rather to throw back than to bring forward the period of Zoroaster and of his works, places them about the middle of the sixth century before the christian era. What! sir, the Zend-Avesta, a work of the sixth century before the christian era, is *the most ancient book in the world*!

Open Mr. Anquetil's translation, in every page you see the two principles; every where Ariman contends with Ormuzd; and you, sir, would persuade us, *that the two principles were really admitted in Persia only in the time of Manes*.

You extol the books of Zoroaster to us, and his translator has boldness and sincerity enough to inform us, "that if we except some ideas of the divinity  
" which are noble enough, and a scheme of morality pure enough, these famous books are nothing  
" but long litanies; that they clash with our manner of thinking and writing; that the small number of truths which they contain, is as it were  
" swallowed up in a multitude of puerilities; that  
" these writings are flat and ridiculous, and full of  
" as bad reasoning as the Alcoran, and as tiresome  
" (1) and disgusting as the Sadder." Such are, according to Mr. Anquetil's opinion, the famous books of the Persian legislator. If you seriously compare these rhapsodies to the pathetick discourses and sublime poetry of Moses and of our prophets, we pity you. A philosophical fever must in this case, have much impaired your taste.

(1) *And disgusting as the Sadder*. These are the words of the Abbe Renaudot, speaking of the Sadder, he calls it *Sordidissimus*, and Mr. Voltaire extols it to us! He calls it the ancient comment of the most ancient book on earth, and this comment is perhaps 250 or 300 years old. A respectable piece of antiquity truly! *Edit.*



But besides, Mr. Anquetil holds an unfavourable opinion of the character of Zoroaster himself. He looks upon him as a well informed philosopher, but he cannot help acknowledging at the same time, that this great man was an enthusiast, an impostor, a persecutor, who, in order to establish his religion, (1) caused the blood of nations to flow.

To return, sir; let the learned form what systems they please on Zoroaster, and the sacred books of the Persians, it is evident that before any advantage can be taken against us from the conformity of those books with ours, and from the names of *Kish Ibrahim*, *Millat Ibrahim* given to the ancient religion of those nations, it must be proved, and solidly too, that those Persian books were prior to ours, and that the religion which they taught was called *Kish Ibrahim*, &c. before Abraham was known of the Hebrews. Upon this, sir, we wait for your proofs. They may form a curious article in your *Questions encyclopédiques*. It will be worth while to see you contending against Freret, Renaudot, Hyde, Pocock, Prideaux, Foucher, Anquetil, &c. and shewing to all these learned men, that with all their application, their skill in ancient and modern languages, and their enquiries on the spot, they are less acquainted with these matters than you are.

§ 4. *Whether the Indians were the first who knew Abraham.*

It is a proverb in your country, sir, that 'tis the privilege of travellers to tell lies. You are not a great traveller, sir, but you lead us very far, from Palestine into Arabia, from Arabia into Persia, from Persia into India. I hope you do not intend to play the traveller on us! However by travelling with you, one may learn very curious and sensible things. We are taught for instance, that Abraham was

(1) *Caused the blood of nations to flow.* This is an instance of the toleration practised by Zoroaster and his Persians. He declared war against the king of Touran, to force him to embrace his religion. This is a new proof that there were no religious wars, except amongst Jews and Christians!



first known in India. *For, you say, if many learned men have asserted that Abraham was the Zerdust, or Zoroaster of the Persians.*

TEXT. "Others assert that he is the Brama of the Indians, which is not demonstrated." (Philosoph. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. We do not ask you here the names of those learned men; we are acquainted with one of them; yourself, sir. Altho' this opinion is not demonstrated, yet you gravely maintain it in your Philosophy of History. But tho' you have not demonstration of this, yet probably you have some proofs; let us see them.

TEXT. "It seems that this name, Bram, Brama, Abraham, is one of the most common names among the ancient nations of Asia." (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. It matters not whether the name is common; this is not the question; but the question is whether they are the same names. Now one of these is an Hebrew, the other an Indian name; the one signifies *high father of a multitude*, the other (1) *powerful spirit*. Therefore, it is probable, that these two names are very different both in derivation and sense.

TEXT. "The Indians called their God Brama, and their Priests Bramins, or Brachmans." (Philosophical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. Well! does it follow that because the words Brama and Brachman have some similitude to that of Abraham, that Abraham and Brama are the same thing? Does this reasoning become

(1) *Powerful spirit*. Mr. Holwell, who lived a long time in India, and there translated a great part of the *Sbafiah*, informs us that the name Bramah is derived from *Bram*, spirit, and *Atab*, powerful. "This name, he says, the Indians give to the author of the *Sbafiah*, by which they denote his spirituality, and the divinity of his mission and doctrine. Hence his successors are called Bramins, in order to shew that they have inherited his divine spirit." It is well known that the name Abraham comes from *Ab*, father, *Ram*, elevated, and *Hammon*, multitude. There is therefore no other similitude between Bramah and Abraham than that of sound. *Edit.*



you, sir, who have so often ridiculed the Huets and Bocharts, for building sometimes on resemblances of names?

TEXT. “ This people (the Indians) whom we  
 “ account one of the earliest nations, make of their  
 “ Brama a son of God, who instructed the Bramas  
 “ in the manner of worshipping him; the veneration  
 “ paid to this name passed quickly from one people  
 “ to another. The Arabians, Caldeans, Persians,  
 “ took it up, and the Jews looked upon him as one  
 “ of their patriarchs.

“ The Arabians, who traded with the Indians,  
 “ were probably the first who had some confused  
 “ ideas of Brama, who they called *Abrama*, and  
 “ from whom they afterwards boasted of descend-  
 “ ing.” (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. This, sir, is a noble explanation of the Indian derivation of the name of Abraham, and of the rout he took from India to Palestine!

Yet you must indulge us in making some reflexions here.

*The Indians whom we account one of the earliest nations, &c.* When you account the Indians one of the earliest nations, sir, you may be right, but when you make them, in another place, *the most ancient* of all nations, you are probably wrong.

*Make of their Brama a son of God, &c.* Sometimes then it seems they make him *their God*, sometimes, *a son of God, who instructed them in the way of worshipping him.* We allow it; but how long is it since the Indians make of their Brama a son of God? Are you very sure that this belief of the Indians was prior to the writings of the Hebrews? Please to produce your proofs, sir.

*The veneration paid to this name passed quickly from one people to another.* No one doubts that the name of Abraham passed quickly thro’ the East; but one might reasonably doubt that this veneration began in India.



*The Arabians, who traded with the Indians, were probably the first, &c.* Might we ask you, sir, why should the Arabians have traded in India before the Persians, who were so very near to India? You can certainly answer this question.

*Were the first who had some confused ideas.* It would have been more to the advantage of your system if they had distinct ones. Confused ideas presented in a confused manner, are not very fit for clearing up a question.

*Some confused ideas of Brama, whom they called Abrama.* Nothing more probable truly! The derivation of these two words, as we have shewn, leads directly to this.

*And from whom they afterwards boasted of descending.* The Arabians have boasted and still boast of their descent from Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. But in what Arabian author have you read, sir, that the Arabians ever boasted of their descent from the Brama of the Indians?

*The Caldeans, the Persians, appropriated it to themselves.* Still assertions and no proofs. But you say,

TEXT. "The name of the Indian priests, and  
 " many sacred institutions of the Indians, have an  
 " immediate relation to the name of Brama; but,  
 " on the other hand, among the western Asiatics,  
 " no society of men was ever called Abramich;  
 " there is no rite or ceremony of that name."

But, sir, do you not know that an whole nation bore the name of the grandson of Abraham? Do you not know that this people has used and still uses an extraordinary and painful rite, and that it uses it merely because it received it from Abraham?

*The name of the Indian priests has an immediate relation to the name of Abraham.* You must mean a relation of sound. Therefore Abraham was known by the Indians before he was known by the Hebrews! A fine way of reasoning!

What, sir, are these the proofs which you oppose



to the existence of Abraham, and to the descent of the Jews, confirmed by so many titles! This surely is mocking your readers!

We take it for granted that you never did believe that the knowledge of Abraham came to us from the Indians, thro' the Arabians and Persians. When this ridiculous notion came first into your head, you probably at first laughed at it, and probably you do so still. But you know your readers; you know that there are many of them who will take up with any thing. Perhaps you adopt that most philosophical principle, that it is very fair to mock fools. But pray, sir, let us hereafter have more humanity and less philosophy.

## S E C O N D E X T R A C T.

*Abraham's travels. Some small geographical mistakes, accompanied with several others. Travels into Palestine.*

Altho' you observe, very ingeniously, that Abraham *was fond of travelling*, yet you do not seem to like his travels; you think them *strange*; let us see whether they are really so; and let us begin by his journey into Sichem.

You think this one incomprehensible. You cannot conceive how or why Abraham could resolve on so long and dreadful a journey. If we believe you, he must have found unconquerable difficulties in it, and he could have no reasonable motive for undertaking it.

§ 1. *Of the difficulties which Abraham had to surmount. Whether they were such as the critic represents them.*

Abraham had undoubtedly difficulties to surmount in removing from Haran to Sichem, and this proves the liveliness of his faith, and the willingness of his obedience. But were these difficulties insurmountable?



First, in order to judge of the length of his journey, we think it would be necessary before all things to settle from whence he set out. Now with regard to this your ideas are not clear, determinate, or just. You say,

TEXT. "Genesis says, that Abraham went out of Haran after the death of Thare his father." (Philosophy of History, article Abraham.)

"After the death of his father, Abraham left Caldea." (Ibidem.)

"It seems extraordinary that he should have quitted the fruitful country of Mesopotamia to go into the barren land of Sichem, at the distance of three hundred miles." (Ibidem.)

"Sichem is more than an hundred leagues from Caldea." (Philosoph. Dict.)

COMMENT. Genesis says that Abraham, having quitted Caldea, went to Haran with Thare his father, and that he went after from Haran to Sichem; and this is easy to conceive.

You say, sir, as we have shewn, *that after the death of Thare, Abraham went out of Haran, and that he left Caldea. That he left Caldea, and that he went from Mesopotamia.* Now all this cannot be easily conceived.

If Abraham went from Haran he did not go from Caldea, and if he went from Caldea we ought not to say merely that he went from Mesopotamia. Do you place Haran, sir, in Caldea? Or do you confound Caldea with Mesopotamia? This is just as if you confounded that part of France called the island of France with the kingdom of France, and as if you said, to go from France, that is, from the island of France. When distances are to be ascertained, there ought to be more exactness and precision in terms.

But you will say, what matter whether Abraham went from Caldea or Mesopotamia, he had still a long way to travel. How far then?

TEXT. "Three hundred miles, or one hundred leagues."



COMMENT. *An hundred leagues!* Frightful distance, shocking journey! How could he go an hundred leagues!

But, sir, although an hundred leagues frighten you, for a wandering family, accustomed to live under tents, and to change their habitations frequently, yet an hundred leagues might not make so dreadful a journey as you think.

Besides, is it very certain that there was the distance of one hundred leagues from Haran to Sichem? If you are sure of this, you certainly know where Haran lay. Yet you tell us,

TEXT. "Out of seventy-five systems formed upon the history of Abraham, there is not one that tells us exactly what this town or hamlet of Haran is, or where it lies." (*Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.*)

COMMENT. It is true that commentators and geographers are much divided with regard to the situation of the town or hamlet of Haran, which is also called Charan.

Some think it is the city of Carres in Mesopotamia, famous for the defeat of Crassus; others, another city called Carres, near Tadmor or Palmyra; and some, a third city of Carres, in the neighbourhood of Damascus.

As for you, sir, you have not the least doubt or uncertainty with respect to this point of geography. You know more of the matter than all the commentators and geographers together; or rather, with no more knowledge than they have, you begin confidently by affirming that there were more than *three hundred miles*, or one hundred leagues, from Haran to Sichem. Might we not justly think a man too bold, who pretends to determine the distance between two places, without knowing the situation of one of them? But here follows another difficulty attending the patriarch.

TEXT. "He had wildernesses to go thro' in his way to Sichem." (*Philosoph. Dictionary.*)



COMMENT. That depends, fir, on the place you make him go from, and the road you make him take.

If he was to go at this day straight from Caldea to Sichem, he would have wilds to pass thro' and perhaps there were such too in the time of Abraham.

But in going from Haran, even the Haran beyond the Euphrates, it was not unavoidable to pass the wilds. Abraham might have gone to Apamia, Emefus, Damascus; from Damascus he might have passed over to Sidon, from Sidon to Carmel, and from Carmel to Sichem. Or he might have gone a still shorter way, from Damascus to the sources of Jordan, from thence to the lake of Tiberias, and from this lake, thro' rich and fruitful plains to Sichem. There are no wilds here, fir.

Now, it is not only possible that Abraham went this way; but it is highly probable, for Genesis says, that he went, not from Caldea, but from Haran, and it was a tradition even among Pagans, that (1) he reigned, or rather resided, some time at Damascus. Therefore these wilds which scare your imagination, are not to be found in this journey.

But here is a new difficulty attending the patriarch,

“TEXT. The Caldean tongue must have been very different from that of Sichem; it was not a place of trade.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *The Caldean tongue must have been very different from, &c.* Who told you this, and what proofs have you of it? None; and we shall shew hereafter that these two languages were not near so different as you think them.

(1) *He reigned or resided, &c.* Genesis confirms this tradition; it implies pretty clearly that Abraham lived some time at Damascus, where it says in one place that Eliezer was of Damascus, and in another place that he was born in Abraham's house. This observation is taken from the learned Bishop of Clogher. Edit.



*It was not a place of trade, &c.* No; but Abraham was not looking for a place of trade, he was looking for pasturage; and mount Carmel, the plain of Esdraelon, &c. and all the places about Sichem supplied him with excellent pastures. Abraham was a shepherd, and why do you talk to us of *places of trade*?

§ 2. *Whether Abraham had any reasonable motive for undertaking this journey.*

But in short, you say, what motives could engage him to undertake such a journey?

TEXT. "He quitted Mesopotamia; he went from one country which is called idolatrous, to another idolatrous country. Why did he go to it? Why did he leave the rich banks of the Euphrates to go into so distant, so barren, and so stony a country as that of Sichem?"

COMMENT. *He went into a country which is called idolatrous, &c.* It was justly called so, for they worshipped in it the Sun, Moon, and all the host of Heaven, witness the idols which Thare made, according to the traditions of the Arabians, traditions which you quote and respect much.

*Why did he go to it?* Even if we did not know why he went, would it thence follow that he did not go, or that he had no reasonable motive for going?

*Why?* Because the country he was quitting was idolatrous; because God had still some faithful servants in that country whither he was going; in a word, as you say yourself, because *it pleased God that he should go*. Are these absurd motives and reasons which the human mind can hardly conceive?

*Why did he leave the rich banks of the Euphrates to go to so distant a country?* Would not one think that Abraham was setting out for the end of the world, or for another hemisphere?

*So barren and so stony a country as that of Sichem, &c.* This was the country in which the Israelites fixed their residence for some time after their entering Palestine and taking Jericho. Here the kings



of Israel fixed the seat of empire, and here the Samaritans built a temple in opposition to that of Jerusalem. Would this country have been preferred to so many others, if it had been as barren in those ancient times as you make it?

Nor was it so in the time of the judicious and exact Belon. "At Naplofa," says he, "which in my opinion was anciently called Sichar or Sichem, the hills are well cultivated with fruit-trees, the olive-tree grows large, the inhabitants cultivate the white mulberry-tree for the food of worms, whose silk they use, figs also grow on small trees." The learned Ludolph also attests, that Mount Gerizim (this, sir, was the country of Sichem) was in his time *very fruitful*; and Maundrell, still of later date, assures us that in the neighbourhood of Sichem, may be seen a rich and fine country, lovely hills and fruitful vallies. This country then might well have pleased Abraham. It might please at this day, if the Arabians did not infest it.

§ 3. *Abraham's age when he undertook this journey.*

But what surprizes you most is, that Abraham should undertake this journey at so advanced an age.

TEXT. "Abraham was one hundred and thirty-five years old when he left his country." (*Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.*) This is a very extraordinary journey undertaken at the age of near an hundred and forty years." (*Philosophical Dictionary.*)

"Abraham was just two hundred and thirty-five years old when he set out on his travels." (*Defense de mon Oncle.*)

COMMENT. *When he left his country.* Probably you mean when he went from Haran, which was not his country.

But, sir, when Abraham left Haran, he was not near an hundred and thirty-five nor two hundred and seventy-five, (for it appears, as a proof of the exact-



nels of your calculations, that the numbers always vary) he was but *seventy-five* years old.

Now this age of seventy-five, was the bloom of life, at a time when they began to have children at seventy, and when men lived to the age of an hundred and fifty or an hundred and eighty.

Abraham lived one hundred and seventy-five years, so that at seventy-five he had not gone thro' half his course of years. He was then what a man of thirty-five or forty would be now. Do you think, sir, that a man of thirty-five or forty is too old to undertake a journey of an hundred leagues. But you say,

TEXT. "Could Abraham be at the same time  
" seventy-five years old only, and an hundred and  
" thirty-five years old?" (*Questions sur l'Encyclo-*  
*pedie.*)

COMMENT. No, sir, and for this reason Genesis does not say in any place, that he was *an hundred and thirty-five* years old, when he left Haran.

It says on the contrary, in plain terms, that he was then but *seventy-five* years old. It makes this exact observation, that long after his return into Egypt, when the Lord promised him that he should have a son within that year, he was ninety-nine years old. It says he was an hundred years old when Isaac was born.

These texts are clear; the age of Abraham is ascertained in them precisely, and in a manner that does not at all agree with the *hundred and thirty-five* years, which you give him when he left Haran.

TEXT. "But this same Genesis tell us, that  
" Thare, having begotton Abraham at the age of  
" seventy, lived till he was two hundred and five  
" years old, and that Abraham did not go from Ha-  
" ran 'till after his father's death. Abraham must  
" therefore have been at that time just an hundred  
" and thirty-five years old." (*Philosoph. Dict. and*  
*Philos. of Hist.*)



COMMENT. This argument supposes that you understand the passage of Genesis, on which you rest your evidence, well. Now this may be contested.

Genesis says, *Thare lived three-score and ten years, and he begat Abraham, Nachor, and Haran.* Hence you infer that Abraham was the eldest brother, and that he was born exactly in the seventieth year of Thare's life; this inference is by no means satisfactory; for Genesis says the same of Noah, that he begot three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, and yet Shem was not the oldest, but Japhet.

We might then answer you, that it is false, or at least doubtful, that by these words, *Thare lived three-score and ten years, and he begot Abraham, &c.* Genesis means that he was the eldest brother, or fixed the precise year of his birth.

(1) We might answer you besides, that the passage of the vulgar Hebrew text, in which Thare is said to have lived two hundred and five years, is contradicted by the Samaritan text, which gives Thare only one hundred and forty-five years of life. And this reading agrees exactly with the other numbers, and takes away all appearance of contradiction.

Therefore most of your learned men prefer this reading to that of the vulgar Hebrew text, which they think has been altered by the copiers in this place. This is the opinion of Bochart, Knatchbull, Clayton, Houbigant.

What do you do then, sir, in order to shew that Abraham was very old when he undertook these journeys? You judge of his time by your own, and you oppose a doubtful or false argument, with a text probably falsified, to four or five clear and express

(1) *We might answer you besides.* This answer would be satisfactory, but our Jewish authors would probably be unwilling to allow that the Samaritan text is more exact than the Hebrew. *Christ.*



passages. You would undoubtedly shew more impartiality if a profane author was in question; you would explain the obscure passage by those which are clear and precise; this is the practice of all critics. Is it unreasonable to require the same equity from you?

Upon the whole then, sir, the difficulties which Abraham might have met with in his journey, were not insurmountable; he had reasonable and strong motives for undertaking it; he was not too old for such undertakings. Therefore it is not a thing *beyond conception* that he undertook and executed it.

### T H I R D E X T R A C T.

*Continuation of Abraham's travels. His journey into Egypt.*

The journey of which we have been speaking, was followed by another, which you think as strange, because thro' heedlessness you do not form juster ideas to yourself of it, than you did of the preceding one.

#### § 1. *Abraham's route.*

TEXT. "He is scarcely arrived in the little mountainous country of Sichem, when famine drives him out of it; he goes to Egypt to look for food. (Philosoph. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. *He is scarcely arrived.* He had been there perhaps a year or more, but no matter.

*He goes to Egypt to look for food.* Very surprizing indeed! Would you have had him stay in a country visited by famine, whilst he could remove into a neighbouring one which had corn? But,

TEXT. "There are two hundred leagues from Sichem to Memphis; is it natural that a man should go look for bread at such a distance, in a



"country of which he does not understand the language? These are strange travels." (Philosophical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. *There are two hundred leagues from Sichem to Memphis.* Not quite, sir; they reckon scarcely more than an hundred and thirty (1) or an hundred and forty. You have only made the distance one third more, a small mistake!

This absence of mind which you had when you wrote your Philosophical Dictionary, continued on you when you wrote your Philosophy of History. Indeed, sir, your absent fits, altho' light, last a long time.

You make Abraham set out from Sichem, but he had already left Sichem; he had lived some time at Bethel, and had advanced towards the southern frontier of Palestine, when he set out for Egypt. Do you know, sir, that the distance from thence to Egypt, did not exceed twenty or thirty leagues? Was it not natural to go and seek for bread so near home, where they were sure of getting it?

It was so natural to have recourse to Egypt in this circumstance, that Isaac drew near to it again, and that Jacob sent his children thither on a like occasion.

This is not all; Genesis says that Abraham went to Egypt, which is easy to conceive. But you send him to Memphis, sir, which is indeed very extraordinary.

But who told you that Abraham was at Memphis? Who told you that Memphis was then the capital of Egypt? Or even that it existed in the time of Abraham? There are some reasons for doubting it. Tanis only is known by our ancient writers. Ho-

(1) Or 140. We form a judgment of this by the relation of Belon, who was but ten days performing this journey, altho' he says in his time there was an extraordinary bad road between Cairo and Jerusalem. Now it is well known that from Cairo to Memphis, there are but three small leagues. It has been observed also in the book called *Defence of the Books of the Old Testament*, that father Eugene, who travelled into that country, reckons but 100 leagues from Cairo to Gaza, and that there are not 40 from Gaza to Sichem. Aut.



mer, who speaks of Thebes, says nothing of Memphis, and Isaiah, of all the Hebrew authors, is the first that mentions it. If Memphis had been the capital of Egypt, in Abraham's time, would our writers have been silent on that head until (1) Isaiah?

*In a country of which he does not understand the language.* But how can you tell, sir, but Abraham did understand this language? Perhaps this language did not differ so much then from the Hebrew language, as it has done since. And besides was it impossible to find an interpreter?

*The mind of man may then without so much trouble comprehend the reasons of such a journey.*

§ 2. *Abraham's conduct in Egypt. A scandalous imputation of the illustrious writer.*

Christians have been for a long time divided with regard to Abraham's conduct in Egypt. Some have said (2) with a view of justifying him, that he did not violate truth in calling himself the brother of Sarah, as she really was his sister; that by this conduct he reserved to himself the right of watching her conduct; that he gained time by this, and had reason to flatter himself, that during this interval, providence, which had conducted him into those parts, would make something intervene to deliver him out of his critical situation.

(1) *Isaiah.* These reasons may be found at full length in Bochart's answer to the poet St. Amand. Bochart maintains in it, that Memphis did not exist in the time of Moses, or at least was not the capital of Egypt. *Aut.*

(2) *With a view of justifying him.* Out of the great number of those who justify or excuse Abraham, we shall mention but one, the learned and moderate Waterland. He maintains, in his work in which he defends the scripture against Tindal, that Abraham did nothing on this occasion unworthy of a wife and good man; that he could reasonably rely on Sarah's fidelity, if the king of Egypt had any sparks of virtue; that if Abraham had acted otherwise, and acknowledged Sarah for his wife, he would have foolishly exposed his life, without making her honour more secure; that altho' we are forbid to lie, yet we are not obliged to tell all truths, especially to a ravisher and a murderer, who would make this discovery subservient to his base ends, the destruction of the innocent, &c. Waterland here rests on the authority of Alexander, to whom he refers his readers. See Natalis Alexander, vol. I. page 202, &c. *Aut.*



(1) Others more severe, have loudly condemned him for having equivocated with Pharaoh, and rashly exposed Sarah's chastity.

(2) It was reserved for you, sir, to impute to this holy man the lowest and basest intention. Your accusation amounts to this, that he attempted to make a base traffick of his wife's beauty.

TEXT. "As she was a fine woman he resolved to profit by her beauty." (Philosoph. Dict.)

COMMENT. So weighty a charge against a man who has been revered for so many ages, and by so many nations for his piety and virtue, would require the strongest proofs. Produce your's, sir. They are nothing but base suggestions, and a scandalous alteration of the text of scripture. If we are to believe you, sir, Abraham said to Sarah,

TEXT. "Feign that you are my sister, that they may do me good on your account." (Philosophical Dictionary.)

But in Genesis, Abraham speaks thus to Sarah, "You are handsome; when the Egyptians shall see you, they will say, this is the wife of that man, and they will kill me. Say then, I pray you, that you are my sister, that I may be well treated, and that my life may be preserved through your means."

You see then, it is not with a view of profiting by his wife's beauty, but to escape from death, which he thinks inevitable, that he requests Sarah, not to feign, but to say that she was his sister, (3) as she really

(1) *Others more severe.* Of this number are Origen, Jerom, Calvin, and many others, both ancient and modern. *Aut.*

(2) *It was reserved for you.* No it was not; for every thing that the illustrious writer says, is only Bayle and Tindal's objections warmed up again. *Edit.*

(3) *As she really was.* She was the daughter of his father, and not of his mother, as Abraham says.

However, although we allow with the crowd of Rabbins, that Sarah was the daughter of Thare by a different wife from Abraham's mother, yet we acknowledge that many learned Jews and Christians, Jarchi, Pole, Wells, Patrick, Hyde, Waterland, &c. assert that she was the sister of Lot, the daughter of Haran, and consequently the niece and not the sister of Abraham. These learned men ground their opinion on this, that Sarah is called in Genesis Thare's daughter in-law, and that in the style of scripture, the



was. Censure him then for his timorousness, if you will; blame him for his weakness, condemn him for his equivocation, but add not an imputation truly calumnious, to a severe judgment.

§ 3. *Sarah carried off.*

The event soon shewed that Abraham's suspicions and fears, were but too well-grounded. The Egyptians, having seen Sarah, give notice of it to Pharaoh, and she is carried off. Upon which you say,

TEXT. "As soon as he arrives in Egypt, the king falls in love with his wife; who was seventy-five years old." (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. Seventy-five years are given her in the Philosophical Dictionary, and but sixty-five in the Questions sur l'Encyclopedie. Can you not be consistent with yourself in speaking upon any point?

But, you will say, can a woman of seventy-five still have charms? You judge, sir, of those ancient time, by your own. You forgot that Sarah lived to the age of an hundred and twenty-seven years, and that she was therefore at that time, what a woman of thirty-six is amongst your people. Do you think that at this age a fine woman, who had bore no children, could not have preserved her beauty sufficiently to inspire us with love? You are too well acquainted with your own history, and with the age you live in, not to know that both these could supply you (1) with several such instances.

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terms brother and sister often signify no more than close relationship. Hence it happens that Lot, Abraham's nephew, is called his brother.

Therefore Don Calmet is not the first, nor the only one who has held that Sarah was Abraham's niece. This supposition is by no means so ridiculous as Mr. Voltaire thinks, and his charge against Don Calmet is very illiberal. Don Calmet, says he, whose judgment and sagacity are universally acknowledged, thinks that perhaps she was Abraham's niece. We see no reason for treating this learned religious in so rough a manner. His comment, quoted with encomiums by strangers, seems to have supplied the illustrious writer with many observations that adorn his writings, which he would probably never have known but for them. Is it out of gratitude, that he calls Don Calmet, in another place, a poor weak writer, without judgment? Such expressions were not made to be applied to Don Calmet by Mr. Voltaire. *Aut.*

(1) *With several such instances.* Mr. Voltaire must not forget at least what he has related of Ninon, his benefactress, and of his godfather Chateaufort. What he says of them is an extraordinary method of immortalizing those persons whose memory is dear to him. See his *Defense de mon Oncle.* *Edit.*



§ 4. *Curious reasonings of the learned critick on the presents made to Abraham.*

If it is distressing to your readers, sir, to see a great man calumniated by a celebrated writer, you soon make them amends for this, by (1) your extraordinary reasonings on the presents which Abraham received from Pharaoh. The consequences, sir, which you draw from this fact are very curious. You say first that,

TEXT. "These presents were great presents, considerable presents." (Philos. of Hist. and Philos. Dict.)

COMMENT. What were they then? Great sums of money, superb vases of gold and silver, rich stuffs, jewels of great value? No.

TEXT. "They consisted of a great quantity of sheep, oxen, he and she asses, horses, camels, male and female servants. (Philos. of History, Philosoph. Dictionary, Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.)

COMMENT. When we consider the manner in which you usher in these *great presents*, we are somewhat surprized to find them suddenly reduced to oxen, sheep, he and she asses, &c.

However, sir, you agree perfectly with the scriptures here, (which seldom happens) except however in the article of horses which it does not mention, and in the expression *a great quantity*, which cannot be found either in the text, or the most exact versions; but which may be added in order to pay a compliment to Pharaoh, and to render the phrase more harmonious.

Such, sir, according to you, were the *great presents*. Let us now see what they prove, according to you.

TEXT. "These presents, which were considerable, prove that the Pharaohs were then pretty powerful kings; the country of Egypt was alrea-

(1) *Your extraordinary reasonings.* We must do this justice to the illustrious writer; the reasonings which he is going to produce on these presents, belong neither to Bayle nor Tindal, &c. they are entirely his own. *Aut.*



“dy well peopled. But in order to make it habit-  
 “able, to establish cities in it, immense labour was  
 “requisite; it was necessary to make the waters of  
 “the Nile flow thro’ a multitude of canals, and to  
 “raise these cities at least twenty feet above these  
 “canals. Probably even many great Pyramids had  
 “been built.” (Questions Encyclopediques.)

“They (the presents) prove that even then E-  
 “gypt was a very powerful and well civilized, and  
 “consequently a very ancient kingdom. (Philoso-  
 “phical Dictionary.)

“They prove that even then this country was a  
 “powerful state; monarchy was established in it,  
 “the arts were cultivated. The river had been  
 “subdued; they had dug canals every whereto re-  
 “ceive its inundations, without which the country  
 “would not have been habitable. Now, I would  
 “ask any man of sense, whether it did not require  
 “ages to found such an empire, in a country which  
 “was for a long time inaccessible, and laid waste by  
 “those very waters which afterwards fertilized it.  
 “We must therefore forgive Manetho, Herodotus,  
 “Diodorus, Eratosthenes, for that prodigious anti-  
 “quity which they ascribe to the kingdom of E-  
 “gypt; and this antiquity must have been very  
 “modern in comparison of the Caldeans, and the  
 “Syrians, &c. (Philosophy of History.)”

COMMENT. Thus, sir, from the presents which  
 Abraham receives from Pharaoh, you conclude, that  
 the world is prodigiously ancient, and that the cal-  
 culations of Manetho, Eratosthenes, &c. are much  
 more reasonable than those of the Jewish writers.  
 Pharaoh gives Abraham *oxen and sheep*, therefore he  
 was a very *powerful monarch*. He gives him *he and*  
*the asses*, therefore the *pyramids were built*; therefore  
 the Hebrew writers are very ignorant, when they as-  
 sert that the world is but six or seven thousand years  
 old. These ideas are new and these arguments ad-  
 mirable!



They have still this further advantage, when they are applied to some other person, to the king of Gerar for example, who also made a present to Abraham of *oxen and sheep*, they become so droll that one cannot help laughing.

Now if we were to say; “as soon as Abraham  
“arrived at Gerar, in the shocking wilderness of  
“Cades, his wife was taken from him by the king  
“of that country, therefore that country was very  
“*well governed*. The king gives him sheep and ox-  
“en, therefore the king was a *very powerful mo-*  
“*narch*. He gives him he and she asses, therefore  
“in this *shocking wilderness* trade flourished, and  
“manufactures did abound; therefore they had  
“*built cities*, and conquered the barrenness of the  
“soil, &c. therefore *the world is very ancient*.”  
Would not you, sir, be the first to laugh at these our arguments? Nay, they would make you burst with laughter! Forgive us then if we laugh a little at your’s.

It is surprising, sir, that you did not see that these presents of the king of Egypt prove exactly the contrary of what you want to prove. If the king of Egypt gives *asses and sheep* to Abraham, this is the present of the chief (1) of an infant-colony, to another chief such as himself. If he gives him slaves, Romulus would have done so too, when he was *king of a village and had plundered some neighbouring villages*.

*Monarchy was established in Egypt, the arts were therefore cultivated, &c.* If you know no countries where monarchy is, or has been established without the cultivation of the arts presently or formerly, you have read but little, or have forgot much. Do you think then, that *the arts were cultivated* in the ages of Romulus and Evander? Do you think they

(1) *Of an infant colony.* We do not deem the kings of Egypt at that time, to have been merely the chiefs of an infant-colony; we have an higher idea of them; but we have not formed it from Mr. Voltaire’s reasonings on the presents made to Abraham. *Aut.*



are cultivated in all the clans of African negroes, and in all the savage colonies of America which have kings? You have often said that they never were cultivated amongst the Jews where *monarchy was established*.

*They had dug canals every where, without which the country would not have been habitable.* What, Egypt would not have been habitable if they had not dug canals every where! We must suppose, sir, that the Egyptians had some habitations before they dug these canals *every where*!

We conceive that without these canals that part of the country which the Nile overflowed could not have been inhabited during the inundation. But we conceive also, that the inhabitants might live on the borders, and that as soon as the waters retired, they might till and sow the lands which the waters left dry, after manuring them.

We conceive again that the inhabitants may have stolen ground by degrees from the inundation; that they may have *dug canals and built cities twenty feet above these canals*. But we conceive too that it was not absolutely necessary, that these canals should have been dug *every where*, that the river should have been subdued, that cities and pyramids should have been built to enable a king of Egypt to give Abraham *oxen and sheep*.

*Now I would ask any man of sense, &c.* And we, sir, would ask any man of judgment, nay yourself, sir, whether this is a rational conclusion, because the king of Egypt gave he and she asses to Abraham, therefore the pyramids were built and the world is exceedingly ancient. Could any man lay such arguments before his readers, if he did not suppose them to be so many (1) *heads of cabbage*?

Thus, sir, a distance ill-determined, a false accusation, misplaced raillery, and ridiculous arguments, in a few words, make up the whole of your difficul-

(1) *Heads of cabbage*. This is Mr. Voltaire's expression, which probably our authors would not have used, if he had not dignified it by using it before them. *Edit.*



ties on Abraham's travels into Egypt. Do you still find these arguments solid, and the travels inconceivable?

#### FOURTH EXTRACT.

*Other travels of Abraham, Other mistakes.*

Let us proceed and examine impartially the history of Abraham and of his travels. The remainder of them seems to you no less extraordinary than the beginning? We must endeavour to make you comprehend this part too.

§ 1. *Abraham pursues the four kings and defeats them.*

That Abraham pursued four kings, that he overtook, attacked and beat them, these are, if we believe you, a number of facts *above all conception*. Let us see first whether you give a true account of this matter.

TEXT. "Abraham, at his return from Egypt, is represented as a wandering shepherd, between Mount Carmel, and the Asphalted lake. This is the most burning desert of Arabia Petraea." (Philosophy of History, article Abraham.)

COMMENT. *Abraham is represented as a wandering shepherd. Granted.*

*Wandering between Mount Carmel, &c.* In Palestine there were two Mounts Carmel, the first, towards the south-west, the other, towards the south-east, at present near the Asphaltit lake, (1) which you always call Asphalted. Probably you mean to speak of this latter Carmel.

*This is the most burning desert of Arabia Petraea.* Every one does not place, as you do, those parts which are between this mount Carmel and the Asphaltit lake; in Arabia Petraea; they are generally supposed to be in Judea, in Palestine.

(1) *Which you always call Asphalted.* The name of this lake comes from the Greek which says Asphaltit, and thus the Academy of Belles Lettres speaks. *Ans.*



2dly, It is true that these places are now *most burning*; but were they so when Abraham returned from Egypt? This is the point in question, and it is what you do not, and cannot prove. Consider, sir, that there was then no Asphaltit lake. All that space which it now takes up was still a fine fruitful country, and watered with good waters. Are you sure that the dreadful catastrophe, which changed this fine country into a bituminous lake, caused no alterations in the neighbouring lands? We think that an alteration may justly be presumed. The very name of Carmel denotes a place abounding in pasturage, and which, for this reason, suited Abraham and his numerous flocks. Certainly, sir, whilst you were writing all this, you had in some degree lost sight of the period of Abraham's return, and of the dreadful event just mentioned which ruined this country.

TEXT. "A king of Babylon, a king of Persia, a king of Pontus, and a king of several other nations, form a league to make war against Sodom and four neighbouring little towns, they take these towns and Sodom. Lot is their prisoner. It is hard to conceive how five kings, so great and so powerful, formed a league to come thus to attack a clan of Arabians in such a wild corner of the earth." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Let us aim at truth, sir, without endeavouring to mislead our readers.

It is certain that it would be hard to conceive that five great and powerful kings, would have formed a league against five little towns. But in the first place you reckon *five kings*. We beg leave to tell you, that you are mistaken, for the scripture mentions only four.

You afterwards make these four kings *great kings, powerful monarchs*. This, sir, it is incumbent on you to prove, and how could you prove it? You can judge of their power only by the sacred writings. Now according to the texts of our scriptures, these kings, whom you call kings of Babylon, Persia, &c.



were (1) a king of Sinhar, a king of Elam, (2) a king of Ellasar, and a king of Goim. But what were Elam, Sinhar, Ellasar, &c. were they large populous countries? This is very improbable, in those times which were so near the new birth of the world. And if those kings had been so powerful, would the kings of five little towns have dared to meet them in pitched battle?

We must add that Chederlaomer and his allies had not formed a league merely against Sodom and the four other little towns, but against all the nations in the neighbourhood of Jordan; against the Rephram, the Emim, the Horians, the Amorites, &c. and it was not till after they had conquered all these nations, that they came and attacked the king of Sodom and his allies, who had been subdued twelve years before by the king of Elam, but had shaken off the yoke, and refused to pay him tribute.

In short, sir, whilst you make the four kings of Sinhar, Elam, &c. *powerful monarchs*, you change the five cities of Pentapolis into *five little towns*; you make of their inhabitants a clan of Arabians, and of their country *a wild corner of the earth*. But upon what foundation all this, I pray you?

This country, according to our scriptures, was a delicious valley, covered with groves, and watered as

(1) *A king of Sinhar*. Hyde, whom Mr. Voltaire has either read or not read, but whom he quotes and esteems, does not, as he does, make of this king of Sinhar, a king of Babylon, but a king of the city of Sinhar, placed according to him at the foot of mount Singarus, of which Pliny speaks. Rex Sinhar non in Caldæa seu Babylonia, sed Sinhar in Mesopotamia, quæ urbs ad radices Montis Singaræ; de quo Plinius. Others make him king of the country of Senaar where Babylon, according to Mr. Voltaire, who seldom is consistent with himself, was not yet built. *Edit.*

(2) *A king of Ellasar*. The learned English commentator Patrick, places Ellasar in Celestria, where accordingly he finds a city called Elas. The king of Goim was according to him, the chief of some Arabian clans near Celestria. These three kings were vassals of the king of Elam or Elymais, Chederlaomer, who is believed by some to have been the Ninyas of profane authors.

However, altho' we can have nothing more than conjectures with respect to the situation and extent of these countries, it is plain, that at a period when population was yet so weak, a king, in order to extend his conquests, did not want such great armies as the king of Assyria and Babylon had afterwards. *Edit.*



Egypt was, or as the garden of the Almighty! It was not then at that time a wild country, and you confound different periods here again very injudiciously.

Even profane authors speaking of this country, from ancient traditions, represent it as beautiful and fruitful. But without allowing it to have had great cities, as (1) Tacitus does without reckoning up thirteen such with Strabo, without believing that the ruins of Sodom, which, he says, were seen in his time, covered the space of seventy-two furlongs in circumference, we may safely pronounce that Sodom, Gomorrah, &c. were something better than little towns.

There is therefore reason to think, that when you represent the four allied kings as *great kings and powerful monarchs*, Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. as *little towns*, and this whole country as a *wild corner of the earth*, you avail yourself of that liberty which is allowed to poets, and that you have not scrupulously adhered to exact truth. But you say,

TEXT. "It is hard to conceive how Abraham discomfited such powerful monarchs, with three hundred country servants, or how he pursued them even beyond Damascus. Some translators have put Dan for Damascus; but there was no such place as Dan in the time of Moses, much less in that of Abraham. There are above three hundred miles from the extremity of the Asphalted lake, where Sodom stood, to Damascus. All this is above our conception." (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. If you cannot conceive, sir, how Abraham discomfited the four kings, and pursued them to Damascus, it is not again your own fault?

*There are above three hundred miles, you say, from the extremity of the Asphalted lake, where Sodom stood,*

3 A

(1) Tacitus does. *Haud procul inde campi, quos ferunt olim uberas magnisque urbibus habitatos fulminum jactu arsisse & manere vestigia.* Histor. l.b. 5. Aut.



to *Damascus*. You know then exactly where Sodom stood? We wish you joy of this discovery, sir. Hitherto the most learned geographers have been divided on this point. Some placed Sodom, as you do, at the extremity of the lake, others a little higher, several at the entrance of it, near the mouth of the river Jordan; all agree that its situation is very uncertain, and your learned countryman Danville, not knowing where to place it, had resolved not to insert it all in his map. Thanks to the discoveries which you have made, sir, in geography, as well as in all other sciences, these uncertainties have vanished; the position of Sodom is no longer doubtful, it stood at the extremity of (1) the *Asphalted lake*.

Now, from the extremity of the *Asphalted lake* to *Damascus*, there were more than three hundred miles. Are you very certain of this? We form some doubt of it, because in another place you say more than one hundred miles. Certainly there is some difference between more than three hundred miles and more than one hundred miles. Perhaps the printer has added the word *three* to one of your texts, or omitted it in the other. Or is this one of your usual absences of mind? Between ourselves, sir, three hundred miles is much, one hundred miles is very little. The truth is, that the distance might be about two hundred miles. And could not you say so?

But no matter where Sodom stood, and what was the distance from Sodom to *Damascus*. Abraham did not go from Sodom, but from the valley of Mambré, where he lived. Now from this valley to Dan, where he came up with the enemy, there are about fifty leagues. Is it inconceivable that Abraham should go fifty leagues, to rescue a beloved nephew from the chains under which he groaned? Is it inconceivable that this small party should, after some days march,

(1) *The Asphalted lake*. It would be proper however that Mr. Voltaire should condescend to prove this, were it only that he might have the credit of instructing Mr. Danville in geography, and of making this squeamish learned man determine the question about the position of Sodom. *Edit.*



overtake another, which besides its own baggage, dragged after it a considerable booty in slaves and cattle? Truly, sir, if this is *above your conception*, your conception is rather narrow.

What astonishes you most is, *that Abraham should have defeated four kings with three hundred country servants*. But we think, sir, that three hundred country servants, hardened by labour, trained to the use of arms, and accustomed to defend their flocks against wild beasts and robbers, were a very fit party for such an exploit; especially if we add to them, as it seems we ought to do, Abraham's three allies, Mambré, Aner, and Escol, with perhaps two or three hundred of their followers. We think that such a party, divided into several bodies, falling suddenly by night, and from different quarters, on an army whom sleep, and that security which victory inspires, left defenceless, might without a miracle, spread desolation and terror among them; and after having routed them, might also without a miracle, drive them fifteen or twenty leagues beyond the field of battle; there is nothing miraculous or impossible here. Profane and sacred history, both ancient and modern, supply us with many instances of such defeats.

You say, sir, that *some translators have put Dan instead of Damascus*. These translators then have made a mistake, because the text says, that Abraham, having defeated the four kings at Dan, pursued them to Hoba, on the left of Damascus; and that Hoba was really near Damascus and not Dan. Never mind these translators, sir, the text is in question, not translations.

You add, that *there was no such place as Dan in the time of Moses, much less in the time of Abraham*. It is true that in the time of Abraham, and even in that of Moses, the city of Dan did not bear that name which it got from the Danites. But does it follow that this place did not yet exist, because the Danites had not yet given their



name to it? The meaning then of this verse is, that Abraham overtook the enemy at that place, which was afterwards (1) called Dan, and that when he had defeated him there, he pursued him to the neighbourhood of Damascus. Is this too above your conception?

§ 2. *Abraham's Journey to Gerar.*

TEXT. "Abraham, who loved to travel, went to the dreadful wilderness of Cades, at the age of one hundred and sixty years, with his wife who was ninety. A king of this wilderness failed not to fall in love with Sarah, as the king of Egypt had done before. The father of the faithful told the same lie he had done in Egypt; he gave out that his wife was his sister, and in consequence received as before, oxen, male and female servants." (Philosoph. Dict.)

COMMENT. *Abraham who loved to travel, &c.* Had you attended a little more, fir, to the periods and chain of the events of which you are speaking, you would probably have seen that Abraham had another motive for retiring to Gerar, besides the *pleasure of travelling*.

He had just been witness to the most formidable spectacle; a shower of fire, torrents of sulphur and of burning bitumen, had consumed the five cities and all their guilty inhabitants. Instead of a fruitful, lovely valley, Abraham had nothing before his eyes but a frightful lake, from whence offensive and pestiferous vapours were exhaled to a great distance; burning ashes covered all the neighbouring lands. Is it extraordinary that Abraham, who, according to you, wandered between mount Carmel, and this now dreadful spot, should have removed far from this dis-

(1) *Called Dan.* Mr. Voltaire may conclude from this, that the name of Dan was added to the text long after Moses. Even if we did allow it, we do not think that he could take any advantage by this conclusion. We have already said that it is very clear that some of the prophets or publick writers have added explanatory notes to the text of scripture. They probably also substituted some modern names to some ancient proper ones, because the former were better known in their days. *Aut.*



mal habitation? And is it not reasonable to believe, that it was on this account, and not because *he loved to travel*, that he changed his residence? You must allow, sir, that if you have the talent of raillery, yet you do not always know how to place your jests properly.

*To the dreadful wilderness of Cades.* We do not assert that this wilderness was a fine country; but if you represent it as absolutely barren, as we have told you before, sir, you are mistaken; it was interspersed with grass, forests, and mountains; pasturage and fruitful land was, in some spots, to be found. That of Cades, in particular, was cultivated, planted with palm-trees, and abounding in corn; for this last reason Isaac retired to it in time of famine; and it is not improbable that the destruction which happened at Sodom was followed by some kind of scarcity, and that this scarcity was the motive that sent Abraham to Gerar.

You make him *one hundred and sixty years old when Sarah was but ninety*. This is an error which you persist in repeating. No, sir, Abraham was not then one hundred and sixty years old, he was but one hundred. The scripture says it plainly.

*Failed not to fall in love with Sarah, &c.* We grant that it is not common for a woman of ninety to cause love; but, as you very well observe, Sarah was then pregnant; the same miracle which enabled her to be a mother, and to suckle a child, might, or rather must have given her the charms of youth. A woman in the weakness and wrinkles of old age cannot bear children. The return of Sarah's beauty was therefore less astonishing than her pregnancy.

*The father of the faithful told the same lie, &c.* You make no difference then between lying and equivocating. We do not justify the latter, and yet we think that these two things should not be confounded. May it not be justly said, that when Abraham is in question, your morality has more severity than justice.



*In consequence received as before, &c.* You see, fir, that Pharaoh, was not the only one who made great presents; the king of a wilderness, as well as he gave sheep and oxen. Was this king of a dreadful wilderness, a great king and a powerful monarch also?

Upon the whole, when we reflect on the noble disinterestedness with which Abraham, after his victory over the four kings, refused, notwithstanding the king of Sodom's request, to accept any share of the spoils which he had rescued from the enemy, must we not reject with indignation the shocking charge you make against him?

These are therefore some small mistakes in what you say of Abraham's victory, and of his journey to Gerar, which ought to be corrected.

#### FIFTH EXTRA CT.

##### *Promises made to Abraham.*

You have neglected, fir, a very favourable opportunity, and a very easy method of rendering your *Questions Encyclopediques* the most interesting part of your works. You might have turned the alphabetical order you follow in them to your profit, by reviewing successively and coolly your ideas and assertions on that immensity of subjects which you have treated. By this means those questions, perhaps the last work which you will have time to publish, would have become an useful, necessary, and consequently a very valuable errata, fit to be placed at the end of all your works. This modest and scrupulous diffidence of your own talents would have pleased the world; they would have admired that noble spirit of generosity which confesses its mistakes; and even your enemies must have allowed that you had a regard for truth.

But so far from retracting your former errors, you repeat them perpetually almost in every article, and add new ones to them.



Thus the article *Abraham*, which is now before us, is but a repetition of what you have (1) often already repeated; there is nothing new in it but what is foreign to it, and a little objection besides, copied again from Tindal. The subject is the promises made to Abraham. If we are to believe you, some bold criticks assert, that these promises were fallacious, and that God did not fulfil his engagements. They say,

TEXT. "The Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, *for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.*" In Sempiternum, (Genesis 13th.)

"The Lord by another oath promises him afterwards, every thing that lies between the Nile and the Euphrates." (Ibidem ch. 15.) Questions sur l'Encyclopedie, article Abraham.

COMMENT. What shall we conclude from these passages, sir? Shall we say that this land was promised and given to Abraham, to enjoy it himself? Some free-thinkers have asserted this; but see what the celebrated (2) Abbè Fourmont says of it; "this assertion, he says with spirit, arises merely from ignorance of the scriptures. No, God had not given this land to Abraham, he had promised it to him, and that for his posterity. The promise is clearly expressed in the 12th chapter of Genesis, *and the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, unto thy seed will I give this land.* And altho' in the 13th chapter, God says afterwards to Abraham, *I will give it to thee, and to thy seed for ever*; yet the sense of the promise is determined, and the accomplishment of it fixed to a certain time,

(1) *Often already repeated.* It must be allowed that for a long time this illustrious writer has done nothing more than repeat not only what others have said, but also what he has said himself more than once. He is perpetually repeating. *Edit.*

(2) *Abbè Fourmont.* This is taken from his *Moneach or Girdle of Sorrow*, a work in which this learned professor of Arabick attacks violently the assertion of Abbe d'Asfeld, who entirely, without the sinister intention of the free-thinkers, had broached this opinion. *Christ.*



“ that is, to four hundred years after. *Know of a*  
 “ *surety, faith he to Abraham, that thy seed shall be*  
 “ *a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall*  
 “ *serve them, and they shall afflict them for four hun-*  
 “ *dred years. But in the fourth generation they shall*  
 “ *come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is*  
 “ *not yet full.* Where is the necessity, says this  
 “ learned man, of producing passages here which  
 “ even children have by heart? Are not there a  
 “ thousand passages in the rest of the Pentateuch,  
 “ which determine this point exactly? And what  
 “ book in the world clears up points better!”

Therefore it cannot be said that this land was given or promised to Abraham for his own enjoyment. And therefore your bold criticks do not go so far. They only ask,

TEXT. “ How could God promise them that im-  
 “ mense tract of land, the country between the Eu-  
 “ phrates and the river of Egypt, which the Jews  
 “ never possessed?” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. It seems to us, fir, that David had carried his conquests (1) from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt; and that Solomon’s dominions extended, with the nations which were tributary to him, from one river to the other. The Hebrews therefore possessed this immense tract, not as an inheritance; it was neither given (2) nor promised to them under this title; but as a conquest; and if this conquest was neither so complete, (3) nor so lasting as they had reason to hope, the reason of this will soon appear.

(1) *From the Euphrates to the river of Egypt.* See Kings, 2d book, ch. 8. Chronicles, book 1st, ch. 18, &c. *Aut.*

(2) *Nor promised to them under this title.* The land of Canaan only had been given to the Israelites as an inheritance. The scripture observes it expressly in several places. *Edit.*

(3) *Nor so lasting.* David had not yet conquered the country of the Sidonians, Tyrians, &c. And most of the tributary nations soon shook off the yoke, some of them towards the close of Solomon’s reign, the others soon after. *Item.*



TEXT. "How could God give them that little spot of Palestine for ever and ever, from which they have been driven so long a time since?" (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *How!* Because when promises are conditional, and that the conditions are not fulfilled by one side, the engagements is void on the other.

Now all our scriptures attest, that the promises of possessing the land of Canaan were made conditionally to our fathers. And what else can be the meaning of so many exhortations to observe the law, if they wished to remain possessors of the land; and of all those threatenings, that the earth should vomit them forth from her bosom, as it had done the ancient inhabitants, if they imitated their idolatry and their crimes?

Your criticks insist on the words, *for ever*, in *sempiternum*, to *the end of all ages*. We may answer them that the Hebrew words which are thus rendered, signify only a long and indefinite space of time; there are numberless instances of this in scripture.

But who has told them that the revolution of ages, and the decrees of providence, may not bring about more happy times for us; and that the Jews, driven so long from their inheritance, shall never enter into it again? The light of Israel is not extinct, and the hope of once more seeing their darling country in a flourishing state, still lives in their hearts.

In a word, the promise of possessing the land of Canaan was conditional; it was made to Abraham only for his posterity; his descendants possessed this land of promise for a long time; the terms of the promise can signify no more; and if they did, the hope of Israel is not entirely lost. We think, sir, that these considerations are a sufficient justification of the faithfulness of God in his promises. But you say,



TEXT. "The Lord adds to his promises, that  
 "the posterity of Abraham shall be as numerous as  
 "the dust of the earth. *So that if a man can num-*  
 "*ber the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be*  
 "*numbered.*"

"Other criticks say, that there are not four hun-  
 "dred thousand Jews on the face of the earth, not-  
 "withstanding that they have always looked on  
 "marriage as a sacred duty, and that their chief  
 "object has always been population. We answer  
 "to these objections, &c."

COMMENT. *We answer (1) to these objections.* If we  
 were to answer as you do, the answers would be  
 weak enough. Let us endeavour to give some more  
 satisfactory.

1st. Even if it was clear that there did not exist  
 this day more than four hundred thousand Jews on  
 the face of the earth, could we thence conclude  
 that the posterity of Abraham has not been, ac-  
 cording to the promise, prodigiously great? Let  
 us not mention, as you do, that infinite multitude  
 of children by adoption, and in the faith; let us  
 reckon neither the descendants of Esau, nor those  
 of the sons of Agar and Cethura. Would not  
 those Israelites only, who since the time of Abra-  
 ham until our days, have descended from him, make  
 up a generation numerous enough to justify the  
 Hebrew figure, which compares them to the stars  
 of the firmament, and the dust of the earth?  
 And what another innumerable race of descendants  
 to this patriarch would four hundred thousand Jews  
 insure, *who look upon marriage as a sacred duty, and*  
*whose chief object is population?*

2dly. But are your criticks very certain, that  
 there are not at this day four hundred thousand  
 Jews on the face of the earth? We are not fond of

(1) *To these objections.* Mr. Voltaire's answer is, that the church, in  
 succession to the synagogue, is Abraham's true race, and that it is indeed  
 very numerous. This answer cannot be very satisfactory to the Jews.  
*Christ.*



making a parade of our numbers ; it is even a stroke of policy in us to conceal it (1) in several places. But without entering here into particulars, which might be detrimental to us, without raising up again those chimeras with which our nation for a long time fed itself, those pretended kingdoms of Thema, Cofar, Chavila, the fabulous empire beyond (2) the Cordeliers, &c. &c. have your criticks never made this observation, that there is no part of the world in which we have not settlements? Cast your eyes

(1) *In several places.* Father Nau, in his travels through the holy land, ascribes this piece of policy to the Jews of Jerusalem. Hasselquist supposes them to amount to thirty thousand in that city only. *Christ.*

(2) *The Cordeliers.* Some of the most famous rabbies, misled doubtless by false relations, for a long time fed their nation with these idle stories. Benjamin de Tudele, a traveller of the twelfth century, says, that he found the kingdom of Thema, at twenty days march from Babylon, northward, which was inhabited by Jews called the sons of Rechab ; that this kingdom extends into the mountains for sixteen days march ; that they reckon two hundred villages in it, an hundred towns, forty cities, and three hundred thousand Jews in these cities, inured to arms, and formidable to their neighbours.

Eldad, who says he was of the tribe of Dan, and who wrote probably at the end of the thirteenth century, relates that the tribe of Dan, followed by those of Gad, Nepthali, and Asher, retired into Ethiopia before the destruction of the first temple, that they settled in the ancient Chavila, where they have gold, silver, precious stones, numerous flocks, &c. that when they go to war the trumpet is sounded, and that an hundred thousand men of cavalry, and an equal number of infantry are assembled, that each tribe carries on war by itself during three months, after which the booty is divided, that there are many of Samson's descendants among them, who are all heroes, &c. &c.

According to the same Eldad, the tribe of Simeon, and the half tribe of Manasse, possess the kingdom of Cofar, and twenty-five neighbouring kingdoms pay them tribute. He speaks also of another tribe, that of Moses, settled near the river Sambarim, in a fertile country abounding in castles and superb habitations. There no unclean or destructive animals are to be found, no flies, foxes or serpents, &c. in a word, nothing that can be hurtful ; the sheep bear twice in the year, and the children never die before their fathers, who live to an hundred and twenty years. The river rolls during six days billows of sand, mixed with rocks, and this with a noise similar to that of thunder, or of a boisterous sea ; on the seventh day the river stops, and is surrounded with a fire which spreads to the distance of half a mile, all around, and hinders every one from approaching it, &c.

Peritfol, a Jew of Ferrara, in his *Sentiers du Monde*, a work published in 1525, and the Rabbi Gerson, the son of Eliezer, in an account published towards the middle of the last century, relate things still more wonderful of the river and country of Sambarim. Manasse, a famous Rabbi, trusting to the testimony of Aaron Levi, a Spanish Jew, who is also called Montecinos, speaks in his *Esperance d'Israel*, of a vast country beyond the Cordeliers, peopled by Jews who are powerful and numerous, &c. Such are the romances in which the Jewish nation reaps comfort for its losses, and feeds its hopes. It appears that our writers have but an indifferent opinion of these accounts. See Basnage, Barattier, Historical Essays on the Jews, &c. *Christ.*



from the bounds (1) of Italy to those (2) of England, pass from Tyrol, to the bottom of Siberia, to the Tartars, to China, India, Persia, Arabia, to the whole (3) Ottoman empire; every where you find Jews. Africa sees them not only on its coasts in Egypt, Algiers, Morocco, &c. but even in the interior parts; and we already reckon several synagogues in America. Do you think, sir, that the Jews, thus spread from one end of the world to the other, do not amount to four hundred thousand? We think you did not form this judgment of us, when comparing us to the Banians and the (4) Guebres, you say,

TEXT. "These two nations are spread over only  
" one part of the East, but the Jews are spread over  
" the face of the whole earth; and if they were gathered together they would form a much more  
" numerous people than they ever were in that short  
" space of time in which they were sovereigns of Palestine." (Premiers Melanges, art. des Juifs.)

COMMENT. This is, we think, plainly contradicting your criticks, for surely you will not say that when David was vanquishing the Ammonites, subduing Idumea, taking Damascus, and extending his

(1) *Of Italy.* The Jews are tolerated in all the Italian states; they have academies at Rome, Leghorn, Venice, &c. they have more than an hundred synagogues in the Ecclesiastical state. *Idem.*

(2) *Of England.* We are assured that if the Jews of Italy, the Comtat, France, Holland, and England were put together, they would amount to five hundred thousand, and twice this number may be found in Germany, Poland, and Russia. *Idem.*

(3) *Ottoman empire.* The Italian Rabbi Simon Luzatier, reckoned up ninety thousand Jews at Salonica and Constantinople, and more than a million of them in the Turkish dominions; *Passano*, he says, *li milioni.*

*Basnage* gives his opinion still more clearly. "It is hard, he says, to determine at this time, the number of souls of which this nation now consists, however we may safely compute them at three millions." These calculations differ much from those of the bold criticks quoted by Mr. Voltaire. *Idem.*

(4) *And to the Guebres.* That is to the Parsi. The word *Guebre* is a reproach, it signifies an *Infidel*. The Turks give this people that name thro' contempt, whom they look upon as idolaters, and worshippers of fire; they hate them as such, and have a long time persecuted them. How happens it that Mr. Voltaire gives this opprobrious name to his dear Parsi, a people who, according to him, has professed a pure religion since the world began. *Edit.*



conquests from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Egypt, the Jewish nation consisted of *much less than four hundred thousand souls*.

If it had always consisted of a much less number, would the kings of Assyria, Babylon, those of Egypt, Syria, even the Romans have sent such powerful armies, and such great generals to subdue them? We must then suppose, that this little nation was very warlike; now you tell us, that it was less so than the Egyptians *ever cowards*.

Therefore, sir, your criticks cannot be right, except you are wrong, very wrong. We prefer the supposition that they are mistaken, and we will oppose your authority to theirs on the present number of the Jews, and conclude that the promise made to Abraham, that he should be the father of a great multitude, may be looked on as literally accomplished, since he has had so many descendants.

§ 1. *The difficulties of the learned critick on the history of Abraham, and our answers summed up.*

Would you wish now, sir, to see at one view what your difficulties on the history of Abraham and our answers amount to? Thus the account stands.

You object to us the long journey he undertook, and you cannot tell from whence he set out; you talk of a dreadful distance, and you confess that it consisted only of an hundred leagues; you say there was a prodigious difference between the languages, and these languages had such an affinity; that whosoever understood one, must easily have understood the other.

You tell us of deserts, which exist only in your imagination; of old age, which was the bloom of life; and of some pretended anachronisms, whilst you fall into real ones yourself.

You object to us the traditions of the Arabians, and you take these traditions from very modern authors, destitute as you confess of taste and knowledge; you produce writings against us, which you



affirm to be the most ancient on earth, and which were written scarce six hundred years before the christian era ; also a book which you cry up, altho' the translator of it declares it wretched ; also, an abridgment of this book which you are so well acquainted with, that you took it for a man.

You send Abraham the distance of two hundred leagues from Sichem to Memphis to seek for bread, and there is not that distance between Sichem and Memphis ; and Abraham did not set out from Sichem, and did not go to Memphis ; he could not go to it for this good reason, that Memphis did not then exist ; and even if it had, he might have got bread nearer home.

In order to render Abraham's victory incredible, instead of four kings you reckon five ; you make of these kings powerful monarchs, without knowing their dominions. You represent to yourself the valley of Sodom, &c. as a savage corner of the earth, and it was a lovely fruitful country ; you place a bituminous lake in it, and there was no lake. You will not allow that a small army may defeat a great one, and history supplies us with many instances of it.

You assert, that God did not give the promised land in possession to the Israelites, and the Israelites assure you, that they have possessed it, and that if they did not possess it more fully, and for a longer time, it was their own faults.

Lastly, in order to shew that the posterity of Abraham has not been so numerous as the promise said, you reduce the actual number of Jews to four hundred thousand, and the Jews will tell you in your ear, that they consist of four millions of souls ; and they think that four millions of men, without reckoning those that have died since the time of Abraham until now, and those that shall be born until the consummation of ages, are a noble race.

We submit this to you, sir, whether the answers are not as good as the objections. Let us conclude



by a reflection which the history of Abraham and of his travels has suggested to you concerning his commentators.

TEXT. "Commentators have wrote a prodigious number of books to justify Abraham's conduct and to reconcile chronology; we must therefore refer the reader to these comments. They are all written by elegant polished geniuses, totally free from prejudice and pedantry, excellent metaphysicians.

COMMENT. Many commentators, so far from having wrote books to justify Abraham's conduct, have condemned it without hesitation; this we have said already; and those who have endeavoured to justify him, have not wrote volumes for that purpose.

Nor have a prodigious number of books been written, to reconcile the chronology of Abraham's history. The whole difficulty lies (1) in one passage, which has or might have been cleared up in a few words.

*We must therefore refer the reader to these comments.* Perhaps the reader might better be referred to the

(1) *In one passage.* This passage, (as we said above,) is the 32d verse of the 11th chap. of Genesis, where it is said, that Thare died at the age of two hundred and five years. We have observed that this difficulty is removed by the Samaritan text, which gives Thare but one hundred and forty-five years at the time of his death, which agrees perfectly with the period of Abraham's birth, seventy years after the birth of his father. We think we shall oblige our readers by inserting here, what a writer has said of it, who is famous for his knowledge of the scriptures, (Mr. Rondet, Journal de Verdun, August 1769.) The difference between the Hebrew and the Samaritan text, (he says) is not so great as it appears at first. These sums may have been written in numeral letters, and then the difference will be reduced to a single stroke of the pen. The letter *koph*, signifies an hundred and the letter *mem*, forty, now this latter differs from the former, but by a stroke of the pen. Let no one say that this reading contradicts the Hebrew text, the vulgate, and the septuagint, so far from this it comes to their assistance, by solving the difficulty which occurs in all these three, and which appeared to St. Jerom insolvable. The faults which creep into a text are not that text. To clear up the text is not contradicting it. No it is rather banishing the spots, and restoring it to its former splendour. This reading does not contradict any part of the text of scripture. On the contrary it reconciles them all. Here is a clear and satisfactory solution, and yet we see it is not a volume. *Christ.*



learned discoveries of the present gentlemen; they are all written by judicious and moderate men, people of deep learning, who reason justly, are free from prejudice, and as we have shewn, are no way giddy.

### S I X T H E X T R A C T.

*Of the Jews, and of the various imputations which the illustrious writer casts on them.*

We shall proceed now with your leave, sir, from the history of the patriarch, to the judgments which you pass on his descendants. Alas, how you handle them, sir! pungent raillery, bitter sarcasms, angry appellations, false and often infamous charges! In short you indulge yourself in every thing that can blacken their characters.

If you were one of those obscure scribblers, whose works are doomed to die before themselves, we should be little moved by these accusations. But your talents and your name are so likely to give them weight, that we think an answer unavoidable. We have already confuted some of your charges; let us now discuss some more of them.

§ 1. *Imputation that they are a vulgar nation, unacquainted with the arts.*

One of the mildest charges you have laid against our fathers, is that they were always vulgar and ignorant. You had said it many times, and you repeat it again in one of your last works. You there talk of them as of

TEXT. "A wretched nation, ever ignorant and vulgar, strangers to trade and the arts."

COMMENT. *The Hebrews were a vulgar people.* Do you think, sir, that no nations are worthy of esteem but polished nations, such as the Athenians, and the French? What do you think then of those



renowned people the Cretans, the Spartans, were they wretched nations?

*Strangers to the arts.* Does it become you, a writer of the eighteenth century, to charge the ancient Hebrews with ignorance? A people, who, whilst your barbarous ancestors, whilst even the Greeks and Latins wandering in the woods, could scarcely procure for themselves cloathing, and a settled subsistence, already possessed all arts of necessity, and some also of mere pleasure; who not only knew how to feed and rear cattle, till the earth, work up wood, stone and metals, weave cloaths, dye wool, embroider stuffs, polish and engrave on precious stones, but who, even then, adding to manual arts those of taste and refinement, surveyed land, appointed their festivals according to the motion of the heavenly bodies, and ennobled their solemnities by the pomp of ceremonies, by the sound of instruments, musick and dancing; who even then committed to writing the history of the origin of the world, that of their own nation, and of their ancestors; who had poets and writers skilled in all the sciences then known, great and brave commanders, a pure worship, just laws, a wise form of government; in short, who is the only one, of all ancient nations, that has left us authentic monuments of genius and of literature. Can this nation be justly charged with ignorance?

*The Hebrews were strangers to the arts.* We confess that they did not know, like the Greeks, how to animate the canvass, and make the marble breathe. An idle audience was not seen among them decreeing crowns to dramattick poets. Their apartments were not adorned with glasses of immense breadth, or repeating clocks; they had no rope-dancers amongst them, nor were burlesque scenes exhibited on the ramparts of their city, &c. &c. But do you not value these shining accomplishments a little too high? Every nation that has them not, appears *wretched* to you. Ancient legislators were of a very



different mind ; ask Minos, ask Lycurgus, and so many others who prohibited those arts, which inchant you, from among their citizens ; ask Plato, who (1) banished poets from his commonwealth. If these arts, the offspring of luxury, were absolutely necessary to the glory of nations, and the splendour of states, by what fatality does it happen that they never make their appearance among any, but as the forerunners of their fall ? When Pericles introduced them into Athens, slavery stood at the gates ; and the golden age of Rome was not that in which an enslaved people asked of its tyrants subsistence and shows.

We may say the same of trade. You have high notions of it, and wise law-givers dreaded it for their commonwealths ; they thought that it would destroy that equality of property, and austerity of manners which they wished to perpetuate and establish among their citizens ; they imagined that as trade brings in wealth, wealth fails not speedily to introduce all those vices which are the forerunners and causes of the ruin of states. And experience has often justified this way of reasoning. The Tyrian, proud of his fleets and of his wealth, has not subsisted so long as the Jew ; the learned and polite Athens never ruled over austere Lacedemon ; and the Carthaginian merchant became the prey of the Roman citizen, who excelled in war and husbandry. Therefore the splendour which commerce gives to states does not insure their duration, nor does it make them truly respectable. Among nations, sir, as well as among private persons, money is not every thing, virtue is something. O ye politicians, who calculate so exactly the products of the arts and the profits of trade, do you think the amor patriæ, religion, and morals, of no consequence in states ?

(1) *Banished poets from his commonwealth.* He did not banish all poets indiscriminately ; he banished none but satyrical poets, who tear the reputation of their neighbours, licentious poets who corrupt their morals, impious poets who bring religion into contempt, and give false notions of the Deity, &c. &c. The philosophical legislator would therefore have left the *Henriade* amongst his republicans, &c. &c.



Upon the whole, you are too well informed not to know that the Hebrews were not always strangers to trade, and that under Solomon and some of his successors they had a very beneficial and extensive one. The charge then of never having had trade, is one of those which you should least of all have laid on us; many nations of antiquity have had less trade, without having been on that account *wretched nations*.

§ 2. *Superstition charged on the Jews.*

Let us proceed to another charge, sir, which you lay on our fathers, with as little justice as the former. If we are to believe you,

TEXT. "The Jews were a superstitious people, and the most superstitious of all people."

COMMENT. *A superstitious people.* What is it you call superstition, sir? Is it to believe in one God, and to worship him only? Is it the having an external worship, and observing religiously such rites as were established for wise reasons?

*The most superstitious of all people.* Either you are absent, Sir, or you do not speak seriously. You certainly forget the Greeks, with their absurd theogony, and their adulterous, ravishing, plundering Gods, &c. (1) the Egyptian worshipping goats and monkies, and offering incense to cats and crocodiles; to leeks and onions; the Romans consulting the sacred chickens on the fate of battles, and consecrating statues to the god Fart, altars to Terror, and temples to Fever; the Persian prostrate before fire, covering his mouth with a veil, lest he should contaminate it with his breath, and rubbing himself over with the urine of an ox, as a purification; the Indian standing whole months on one leg, his arms extended, his neck inclined, or driving large nails into his buttocks, and dying with resignation, holding a cow's

(1) *The Egyptian.* The illustrious writer has declared strongly against the superstitions of Egypt. The religion, says he, of those priests (the Egyptian priests) who ruled the state, was worse than that of the most savage nations. It is well known that they worshipped crocodiles, cats, onions, and there is not perhaps now on the face of the earth any other sort of worship so absurd, except that of the great Lama. *Edit.*



tail in his hand. You forget all the nations of antiquity paying religious worship to wood and stone, searching for future events in the course of the heavenly bodies, and in the flight of birds, consulting soothsayers, interrogating the dead, applying to enchanters, trembling before forcerers, &c. in a word given up to the most absurd and extravagant superstitions. And even if their superstitions had been merely ridiculous and absurd, but they had many besides which were impure and cruel! How many nations thought they honoured their gods by infamous debauchery and shocking sacrifices, in which their fellow-creatures or their own children served as victims? All these ridiculous and abominable species of superstition tolerated, authorised by their laws, and which amongst them formed a part of public worship, were expressly forbidden to the Jew by his law; and yet you charge him with having been the most superstitious of all men! If we judge of this people as we ought to do, by its worship and its laws, it has been certainly less tainted with superstition than any other ancient people.

§ 3. *Charge of Usury.*

You have just now, sir, called the Jews an ignorant and vulgar nation, strangers to trade, you now charge them with a very lucrative trade, that of money-lending.

TEXT. "They were usurers, they practised usury every where, according to the privilege and blessing of their law."

COMMENT. You might have censured the Jews, sir, without attacking their law. And, in truth, what is there reprehensible in this law?

It forbids them to take any interest from their brethren; it commands them to lend freely to one another. This was a wise law, because if it had been permitted to lend at interest, in a country where the great resources of trade were unknown, and where the inhabitants lived entirely by their lands and their cattle, the borrower would soon have been swallowed



up by the rich and greedy lender, as often happened in the first ages of Rome ; it was a charitable law too, and if we are not mistaken, unprecedented amongst ancient nations ; it recalled to the minds of the Hebrews their common origin, and obliged them to treat one another as relations and brethren, and thus united them more firmly together by the ties of gratitude and benevolence.

But the law permitted them *to lend at interest to strangers*. Yes, and in this it only gave them that liberty which they gave to one another, not only the native to the stranger, but the citizen to his fellow-citizen. Was it fit to deprive the Hebrews of this way of getting bread, and oblige them to lend their money freely to those trading nations which surrounded them, and to run the risks of trade without sharing in the profits of it ? If you think, sir, that Jews could not lend strangers money at interest without transgressing the law of nature, your morality is too rigid. That of the great Montesquieu, and even of many of your casuists is not so severe ; you require a perfection from the Jews which even Christians, in most commercial states, dispense with. Was it not sufficient for them to require no forbidden or exorbitant interest ; to commit no frauds or extortions ; in a word, to deviate in no wise from the general principles of equity and humanity, which are founded on the law of nature ?

Perhaps you may say, that the Jews never observed these rules. We allow that some of them have transgressed them ; but do their laws give them any dispensation here ; Let the guilty be punished, but let no charge lie against the nation, or its laws.

§ 4. *Robbery and plunder charged on the Jews by the illustrious writer.*

You think it not enough, sir, to accuse us of usury, you call us besides robbers and plunderers.

TEXT. “ Their God makes robbers of this whole nation ; he orders them to borrow and to carry away all the vases of gold and silver, &c.”



This charge has been so often answered, that we have reason to be astonished at finding it so often repeated in your works.

Must we be obliged to tell you once more that although it were certain, (1) which is not the case, that the Hebrews had *borrowed* from the Egyptians vases of gold and silver, which they carried off, there was nothing blame-worthy in their conduct. This gold and silver was the lawful hire of their long and painful services.

In vain you will answer, that slaves have not a right to pay themselves; this is confounding the rights of private persons with those of nations; private persons have courts of justice, to which they may complain and obtain redress, but nations have no such thing, they are their (2) own judges.

To robbery, you say, the Hebrews soon added plunder.

TEXT. "They possessed themselves of the country of Canaan, which did not belong to them."

COMMENT. If you call our fathers plunderers on account of this conquest, what were your fathers?

TEXT. "If it is asked what right strangers, such as the Jews, had to this country, it is answered, that they had the right which God gave them."

COMMENT. Can there be a better one? If the answer was, that they had that right which force gives, would you think it a better one? In a word, if they held this country from God, no possession could be more lawful; if they obtained it by the sword, they

(1) *Which is not certain.* James Capella, and other interpreters say, that the Israelites had not *borrowed* but *demand*ed these rich vases as a free gift. And indeed the Hebrew word *Shaal*, signifies at least very frequently *to demand*, and not *to borrow*. Josephus says also, that the Egyptians made great presents to the Hebrews, some out of regard, and some in order to make them leave the country speedily. See Chais.

We have thought ourselves obliged to adopt the common interpretation. *Aut.*

(2) *Own judges.* There may be a fuller and more satisfactory answer made to this objection. God is supreme proprietor of all things on earth, and he thought proper that part of the Egyptian property should go to the Israelites, and for this purpose he gave *them favour* in the sight of the Egyptians. The act therefore was really God's, and his people were in this case merely his instruments. *Transf.*



were in the same case with other nations whom you extol.

TEXT. “The Jews used to say, we descend from Abraham, the son of a potter, Abraham travelled amongst you; therefore your country belongs to us.”

COMMENT. It is easy, but it is not fair to make your adversaries reason in a ridiculous manner. The Jews, sir, never reasoned thus. No, but they used to say, “God promised to our fathers to give this country to their descendants; he has put us in a way of conquering it; we are come to take possession of it; flee or submit. If you resist, we shall proceed according to his commission, to punish your crimes and destroy you.” We think, sir, that this language, supported by so many miracles wrought in their favour, had nothing ridiculous in it. If instead of this they had said, “you have fruitful lands and we have none; give your lands up to us or you shall fall by the edge of the sword;” they would have said no more to the Canaanites than the Medes said to the Assyrians, the Persians to the Medes, the Romans to the Persians, the Franks and the Goths to the Romans, &c. in short, what every conquering nation has said to the conquered. How comes it that these latter seem to you to be renowned warriors, and the former detestable plunderers? We see but one difference between both parties, which is that splendid miracles proved that the Jews were favoured by God in their conquests. Therefore to charge them with plunder, is charging God himself, or accusing them in particular of a crime, which they have committed in common with almost all the nations of the earth.

All these charges therefore of vulgarity, ignorance, superstition, usury, plunder, &c. which you have so often repeated, are either vain or false; they are also only the forerunners of a still more shocking one, which you are preparing against us. Happily for us the heinousness of it, added to the want of



proofs, will be sufficient grounds for not giving it a serious answer.

### S E V E N T H E X T R A C T.

*Of the Jews ; whether they were, as Mr. Voltaire affirms, a nation of Cannibals.*

What an advantage it is, sir, to possess a spirit of impartiality and superior knowledge, when a man is investigating antiquity ! Such a man will make discoveries which common criticks would not even have suspected.

Such a discovery you have now made, which will be a lasting addition to our treasure of historical knowledge ; it is a curious, singular, interesting discovery, which belongs wholly to you, without being obliged to share the glory of it with any body else.

This mighty discovery, which so many great interpreters and learned commentators, so many good historians and able criticks have overlooked, and which was reserved for you, is, that our fathers were a clan of savages, such as the Cannibals, or worse, man-eaters, among whom this horrid food was common, even in the time of the prophets.

Until your time, sir, this fact was unknown, and you have now blazoned it to the world. This assertion so new, not to say extraordinary, appeared to us at first to be one of those jokes in which certain writers indulge themselves, sometimes even on the most serious subjects ; and the nonsense which you throw out so merrily in the letter of your Mr. Clopitre, confirmed us in this opinion.

But however, it appears that your assertion is undoubtedly serious ; you repeat it gravely in a work where you give yourself out for the friend and reconciler of men. From this work it has passed into others, even into the Dictionary termed Philosophical, and even into the additions to your wise and veritable Universal History.



If the novelty of the discovery has astonished some readers, the singularity of the proofs, on which you establish it, will surprise them still more. We shall now produce some of the most demonstrative among them. By these we may form a judgment of the rest.

We shall pay no attention to the things which you make your Mr. Cloepitre say. These are not arguments to be canvassed, but jokes to be laughed at. You are worthy of a hearing only when you speak as an historian and a philosopher.

§ 1. *First proof drawn from this that many nations have fed on human flesh.*

There have been nations man-eaters, therefore the Jews were so. Thus you reason; and this argument appears so convincing to you, that you employ it with the greatest confidence.

TEXT. "The greatest part of travellers and missionaries, (you say in your additions to the Universal History) agree that the Brafilians, the Caribs, the Iroquois, the Hurons, &c. devour their captives; and they do not look upon this as the act of some individuals, but as the custom of the nation. So many authors, ancient and modern, have spoke of man-eaters, that it is impossible to doubt their existence. I saw in the year 1725, at Fontainbleau, a female savage of the colour of ashes; I asked her if she had ever eat human flesh, she answered me yes very coolly, and as if she was replying to a common question. In the most polished ages, the people of Paris eat the bloody remains of Marshal d'Ancre, and the people of the Hague devoured the heart of the great pensioner de Wit." (Additions.)

"We have spoke of love, (you say again in your Philosophical Dictionary, article Anthropophages) it is cruel to go from people who kiss one another, to others who eat one another. It is but too true that there have been man-eaters;



“ we have found some in America, there are proba-  
 “ bly some still in it. The Cyclopes were not the  
 “ only feeders on human flesh ; the Tintyrites, the  
 “ Gascons, the Saguntines fed formerly on the  
 “ flesh of their countrymen. Why should not the  
 “ Jews have been man-eaters ? This was the only  
 “ thing God’s chosen people wanted to make them  
 “ the most abominable nation on earth.” (Philoso-  
 phical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. We do not dispute what so many ancient and modern writers have related. And since the greatest part of the first travellers and missionaries all agree that the Brazilians, &c. feed on human flesh, and that a female savage of the colour of ashes, (1) for the colour is a great matter, answered you coolly that she had eat of it, we are far from denying such well-attested facts. We will even allow the report of antiquity concerning the Cyclopes, who sometimes eat human flesh, &c. &c. But we do not believe that you wish to draw from these examples any inference against our fathers. The origin of the Jews is well known, and we are certain that they never had the advantage of passing thro’ the savage state, which a great philosopher of the eighteenth century says is the state of nature. Perhaps they have not been so well polished as the descendants of the Gauls, nor are they so phlegmatick as the Dutch ; but it would be hard to shew that they have been oftener subject to those violent gusts of passion than the nations just mentioned. Even these fits of rage, when scarcely two or three such instances can be produced in the whole history of a nation, are not sufficient grounds for branding them with

(1) *For the colour is a great matter.* The colour is of no consequence here, but it is inconceivable of what consequence it is in other places, according to the opinion of the great writer whom we have the honour of attacking. The colour, he says, distinguishes the several races of men ; a fair and a brown man ; a black and a white, &c. &c. cannot possibly have descended from the same stock ; this is evident beyond dispute. See however what the learned author of the defence of the books of the Old Testament says of it.  
*Aut.*



the name of Cannibals ; and in short, as there is always something shocking in devouring a fellow-creature, we think that a whole people ought not to be charged with it merely on conjecture or inference.

*It is cruel to go from people who kiss one another, to others who eat one another.* Happy transition ! Poignant contrast ! (1) What a fund of wit and decency here !

*Why should not the Jews have been men-eaters ?* This *why not* is truly convincing and demonstrative. It is hard to hold out against such powerful reasonings as this ; and what follows especially is full of politeness, philosophical moderation, and particularly of the love of truth ; this is one of the noblest antitheses in all your works where they abound.

*The Tintyrites, the Saguntines, the Gascons, &c.* There is we think some difference between these nations and the Hebrews. Ocular witnesses, well informed travellers, say that the former of these feed on human flesh, but before you, no writer ever said that the Israelites generally used this food. Your authority, sir, is certainly very respectable, but it is not altogether cotemporary, nor, at least when our fathers are in question, is it quite impartial. Could you quote no authority nearer to their times ? Yes, you say,

§ 2. *Second proof. Threatenings of Moses.*

TEXT. “ Even Moses threatens the Jews that  
“ they shall eat their children, if they transgress the  
“ law.” (Additions.)

“ They are not commanded in any place to eat  
“ human flesh ; they are only threatened with it ;  
“ and Moses tells them that if they do not observe

(1) *What a fund of wit and decency here.* Thus in the remaining part of this article, these abominable excesses are called fooleries. Such is the light tone which the author assumes in this philosophical work. See *l'Apolo-  
gie de la Religion Chretienne*. Mr. Voltaire has declared that all the articles in the Dictionary are not by the same hand ; perhaps then the article *Anthropophages* is not his. The new edition will probably clear up what articles are properly his. *Aut.*



“ his ceremonies, the mothers shall eat their children.” (Philosophical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. This proof, sir, is as strong as the former.

*Moses threatens the Jews that they shall eat their children, &c.* Therefore they were man-eaters! A consequence nobly deduced! Others would draw a quite contrary conclusion; but every man has his peculiar way of reasoning, and the logick of illustrious writers is very different from that of the vulgar.

*The Jews are not commanded in any place to eat human flesh.* This confession is very kind, you deserve the thanks of the Jewish nation for it.

*They are only threatened with it.* Since they are threatened with it, this is a proof that this sort of food was neither commonly used amongst them, nor agreeable. If a Cannibal was threatened with being compelled to eat human flesh, he would laugh. People can only be threatened with nauseous detestable food; thus your very expressions contradict your arguments.

§ 3. *Third proof drawn from the promises of Ezekiel.*

But you say, sir, that as they are threatened in one place with being obliged to eat human flesh, so they are promised it, as an indulgence, in another.

TEXT. “ Ezekiel promises the Jews, by way of encouragement, that they shall eat human flesh.” (Treatise of Toleration.)

“ And (page 22d of the additions to the Universal History) the prophet (1) Ezekiel promises the Hebrews from God, that if they defend themselves well against the king of Persia, they shall eat the flesh of horses and of the riders.”

(1) *Ezekiel promises, &c.* If Mr. Voltaire speaks seriously, as there is reason to believe, is it credible that he ever read the place of Ezekiel which he quotes so often? If he means a joke, where is the jest in misrepresenting a writer, and making him say what he never thought? *Edit.*



“ And (in the Sermon of the Rabin Akib) our  
 “ enemies accuse us of having offered up men,  
 “ and even of having eaten them, as Ezekiel  
 “ says.”

“ And (article Anthropophages, Philosophical  
 “ Dictionary) it is certain that the Jews must have  
 “ used human flesh for food in the time of Ezekiel,  
 “ since he foretells to them, in the 39th chapter,  
 “ that if they defend themselves well against the  
 “ king of Persia, they shall eat not only the horses  
 “ but besides the horsemen, and the other men of  
 “ war. This is positive.”

COMMENT. This at least is often repeated in your  
 works. This proof appears so convincing to you,  
 that it returns perpetually. Let us, with your per-  
 mission, sir, examine it.

*Ezekiel promises the Jews that they shall eat the flesh  
 of horses and of the riders.* Therefore this flesh was to  
 them excellent food. Now indeed the consequence  
 is just, it is irresistible; it only remains to enquire  
 whether the prophet really asserts what the philoso-  
 pher puts into his mouth. But can this be doubted,  
 or the least suspicion formed of it? To quote falsely,  
 and ascribe to an author a very different meaning  
 from his real one, not once and cursorily, but in  
 twenty places, not only in jest but in earnest; can  
 a grave historian and a philosopher who loves truth,  
 be guilty of these things? This is playing too openly  
 on the credulity of his readers, and greatly abusing  
 the confidence they place in him.

However the flesh of horse and horseman was not  
 a common food; as our philosophical historian is  
 a poet, and that poets sometimes indulge themselves  
 in fiction, it will not be improper to produce here  
 the whole passage of the prophet. Thus it runs in  
 the translation.

“ Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against  
 “ Gog and say, Thus saith the Lord God, behold I  
 “ am against thee O Gog. And I will turn thee  
 “ back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and



“ will cause thee to come up from the north parts,  
 “ and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel :  
 “ And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and  
 “ will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right  
 “ hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Is-  
 “ rael, thou and all thy hands, and the people that  
 “ is with thee : I will give thee unto the ravenous  
 “ birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to  
 “ be devoured. Behold it is come, and it is done,  
 “ saith the Lord God, this is the day whereof I have  
 “ spoken. And they that dwell in the cities of Is-  
 “ rael shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn  
 “ the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers,  
 “ the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves,  
 “ and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire  
 “ seven years : So that they shall take no wood out  
 “ of the field, neither cut down any out of the fo-  
 “ rests ; for they shall burn the weapons with fire,  
 “ and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and  
 “ rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God.  
 “ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will  
 “ give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel,  
 “ the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea ;  
 “ and it shall stop the noses of the passengers ; and  
 “ there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude,  
 “ and they shall call it the valley of Hamon-gog.  
 “ And thou son of man, thus saith the Lord  
 “ God, speak unto every feathered fowl, and to  
 “ every beast of the field, assemble yourselves, and  
 “ come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacri-  
 “ fice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacri-  
 “ fice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat  
 “ flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of  
 “ the mighty, and drink (1) the blood of the prin-

(1) *The blood of the princes of the earth, &c.* We Hebrews think, that a man might find in this passage, tho' poorly translated, warmth, strong ideas, bold figures, &c. Some Christians are of the same way of thinking, but they may be mistaken as well as we. We read something similar to this in the Runnic poetry, *the ravens and the vultures*, says the poet, *lament the mighty war which was preparing for them a rich feast*.

But all these strokes of barbarous eloquence do not come up to what the Philosophical Dictionary says, *that warriors, for the poorest salary, do the office of cooks for ravens and worms*. It is probable that most people will find these expressions very elegant. *Edit.*



“ces of the earth. And ye shall eat fat ’till ye be  
 “full, and drink blood ’till ye be drunken, of my  
 “sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye  
 “shall be filled (1) at my table with horses and cha-  
 “riots, with mighty men, and with all men of war,  
 “saith the Lord God.”

A man, sir, must have your eyes to see, that in this place Ezekiel promises the Jews to give them human flesh to eat; certainly none but yourself can see any thing like this in it. The text and common sense evidently confine this promise to ravenous animals.

§ 4. *A scruple of the critick.*

It seems, sir, you have had some *stings of conscience*, for having extended this promise even to our fathers.

TEXT. “It is generally thought, that (2) a mistake has been committed in that place where the passage of Ezekiel is quoted, which promises that they shall eat the flesh of the horse and the horse-man. This promise is made by the prophet to ravenous animals.” (*Treatise of Toleration.*)

COMMENT. *It is generally thought.* As if you was not sure of it, and that any body could reasonably form a doubt of it.

*This promise is made.* One would imagine that you were going to confess your mistake and retract it; but this is not the case, your scruples last but a short time. You immediately add,

TEXT. “There are four verses in which the prophet promises this food of blood and slaughter. The two last may be applied to the Jews as well as to wolves and vultures; but commentators apply them only to ravenous animals. (*Ibid.*)

(1) *At my table.* We shall observe, en passant, that with respect to these words, *at my table*, the almoner Mr. Clockpitre makes a most judicious reflection; it is this, since a table is mentioned, these verses must be applied to the Jews, for, says he, ravenous animals do not make use of a table. This kind of reasoning, or rather pleasantry, runs thro’ this whole letter. Truly if there is salt in it, it is not Attick salt! *Edit.*

(2) See nota bene at the end of the first edition of the *Treatise on Toleration*.



“ If some commentators apply these two verses to  
 “ ravenous animals, there are several others who ap-  
 “ ply them to the Jews.” (Ibidem, another edi-  
 tion.)

COMMENT. *The two last verses may be applied to  
 the Jews, &c.* Certainly they may, if all the rules  
 of grammar and good sense are violated.

*But commentators apply them only to ravenous ani-  
 mals, &c.* Very true, commentators make no other  
 application of them. How then could you say in  
 the other edition, if some commentators apply these  
 two verses to ravenous animals, there are several  
 others who apply them to the Jews? We think we  
 see a contradiction here; but probably we are mis-  
 taken; you have some method of reconciling such  
 contrary assertions.

*There are several others who apply them to the Jews,  
 &c.* If you know several, you should at least have  
 named some. As for us, we confess we know none,  
 not one except you put yourself in the list of com-  
 mentators. But you assert that there are such, and  
 that is sufficient for some readers. How can we re-  
 fuse to believe an author on his word who declares,  
 that when he writes, truth holds the pen?

Such are your strongest proofs, sir; such is the  
 justness and solidity of your reasoning! Is it not evi-  
 dent that the Hebrews are thus clearly convicted of  
 eating human flesh, not only in common, but as de-  
 licious food? This discovery indeed is humbling for  
 their descendants! But what can they do? What an-  
 swers can be given to such demonstrations?

To conclude. After having laughed a little at  
 the reasonings, let us sincerely pity the reasoner.  
 Does it become, sir, so great a man as you are, a phi-  
 losopher, the enemy of prejudices, the first historian  
 of his nation, to dishonour his writings by such  
 gross calumnies and false quotations? And, to use



your own words, ought he *to offer* (1) *such high insults to truth and to his readers?*

The illustrious Bossuet did not write history in this manner. This great man and truly sublime genius whom you dare call *a declaimer*, was better acquainted with its dignity and laws. He well knew that altho' it is the province of history to judge nations, yet it has no right to calumniate them.

And what sort of philosophy is this, which hurried on by passion, and enslaved by the blindest prejudices, indulges itself in these sallies of abuse, against a people whose descendants are already but too much to be pitied? Is this the philosophy of Locke, or Montesquieu?

You say, somewhere, that there are historical errors and historical lyes; add to this, that there are historical calumnies; and judge yourself in which class is to be ranked this imputation which we have now confuted.

#### E I G H T H   E X T R A C T.

*Of circumcision. Mistakes and contradictions of the learned critick on the practice of this rite amongst the Hebrews.*

Circumcision, sir, is a subject in which you have not had success. You have often spoke of it, but

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(1) *Such high insults, &c.* We do not approve the use of such expressions with regard to Mr. Voltaire, altho' he has not scrupled to use them against the Jesuit Daniel. There is a certain style and certain liberties which great men may assume, but which the rest of mankind must not pretend to. *Edit.*

Because this Jesuit happened to say that Harry IV. embraced the Roman religion, not only thro' state policy, but thro' conviction, Mr. Voltaire infers that a Jesuit cannot be a faithful historian. This may be true; but it may be affirmed not only of a Jesuit, but of every man who is not impartial, no matter what coat he wears.

He says in another place, that father Daniel does not pass for an historian of great depth and boldness, but that he is accounted a very faithful one. Compare these several assertions.

He adds, that father Daniel sometimes falls into mistakes, but that no man can justly call him a liar. And yet we may justly say, that he offers insults to truth and to his readers. We may justly call him a wretched historian. *Dans des Conseils raisonnables.*

Thus this great man takes liberties which he will grant to no others, even the liberty of contradicting himself, which he would not fail to censure severely in any other. *Christ.*



never without falling into such mistakes and contradictions as astonish us in a writer of your merit. Permit us, sir, to point out some of them to you. We shall begin by those you have committed on the practice of this rite among the Hebrews.

We open the Philosophical Dictionary and we read,

TEXT. "It is said in the book of Joshua, that the Jews were circumcised in the wilderness." (Philosoph. Dictionary, article Circumcision.)

COMMENT. Precisely the contrary is said in the book of Joshua. It is said expressly there, *that all the people that were born (1) in the wilderness by the way, as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised*; that it was after the passage of Jordan, and before the taking of Jericho, at Gilgal, in the land of promise, that Joshua had them circumcised, and that this general circumcision was like a renewal, or a second institution of this rite, which had been (2) interrupted in the wilderness. Is it possible that there should be a palpable contradiction between what the book of Joshua says, and what you make it say?

But it is not sufficient to make the book of Joshua, in a quotation, say quite the contrary of what it really does; you contradict yourself besides in the plainest manner.

TEXT. "Circumcision, this seal of God's covenant, was not practised in the wilderness." Toleration, p. 18.

COMMENT. Therefore, according to the Philosophical Dictionary, our fathers were circumcised in the wilderness, and according to the Treatise on Toleration, they were not circumcised in the wilderness. But this is not all, you add,

TEXT. "The posterity of Abraham was not circumcised till the time of Joshua." (Philosoph. Dictionary.)

(1) *In the wilderness.* See Joshua, ch. 5. v. 5.

(2) *Interrupted, &c.* See *Ibidem*, ver. 2, 3.



COMMENT. We shall soon shew you, that the posterity of Abraham was circumcised before the time of Joshua.

But in the mean while, let us observe here, that the time of Joshua does not begin until after the departure from the wilderness; and that in the time of Joshua, Abraham's posterity was circumcised in the land of promise.

Therefore, according to the same article of the Philosophical Dictionary, Abraham's posterity was circumcised, a few lines higher, *in the wilderness*, and a few lines lower, *in the land of promise*; some lines higher, *before Joshua*, and some lines lower, *in the time of Joshua*. What a series of contradictions!

You say somewhere, that contradictories may often be reconciled; reconcile these if you can.

TEXT. "The Jews who resided two hundred and fifty years in Egypt, say that they did not get themselves circumcised during that space of time." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. The Jews never said or could say such a thing.

And truly as Moses, Aaron, and all the Jews who died in the wilderness, had been circumcised, and as this was not done in the wilderness according to the testimony of scripture, and your own assertions, we pray you, sir, to inform us where this was done?

We shall add, that if the Jews neglected circumcision for two hundred and fifty years, which was the space of their residence in Egypt, this is a strong proof that this rite was not yet used among the Egyptians; and that the foreskin was not, as you say, an object of horror and contempt to them.

It is surprising that you do not perceive the inconsistency of your two positions; you maintain on one hand, that the Jews did not get themselves circumcised during the two hundred and fifty years in which they resided in Egypt; and on the other hand, you affirm, that they borrowed the rite of circumcision



from the Egyptians ; this is uniting two opinions, the one of which evidently subverts the other.

But here follows something more extraordinary.

TEXT. " The circumcision of Abraham was not followed by that of others, and his posterity was not circumcised until the time of Joshua." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *The circumcision of Abraham was not followed by that of others.* Do you not know then, sir, either the passages of Genesis, in which it is said that Ishmael and Isaac (1) were circumcised ; or the discourse of Jacob's children to the father (2) of young Sicheim ? *We cannot do this thing, say they to him, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised. For that were a reproach unto us ; but in this will we consent unto you, if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised, then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you and we will become one people.* Does not this discourse prove clearly, that the posterity of Abraham not only kept up the practice of circumcision, but that they looked upon it as of indispensable obligation, and as a character which distinguished them from the other people of Palestine ?

To these texts you might have added that of Exodus, where it is related that circumcision was given to (3) the son of Moses when his father was on his journey returning into Egypt ; and that of Joshua, where it is said expressly, as we have already observed, that the Israelites who died in the wilderness, (consequently before the circumcision of Gilgal, and the time of Joshua,) (4) had all been circumcised.

The Israelites therefore were circumcised when they went into Egypt, and they went out of it in like manner. Thus it appears that *the circumcision*

(1) *Were circumcised.* Genesis, ch. 17 v. 26. ch. 21. v. 4. *Aut.*

(2) *Of young Sicheim.* Genesis, ch. 34. v. 14. *Aut.*

(3) *The son of Moses.* Exodus, ch. 4. v. 25. *Aut.*

(4) *See Joshua, ch. 5.*



of Abraham was not followed by that of others, and that his posterity was not circumcised until the time of Joshua!

TEXT. “(1) The book of Joshua, says; *And the Lord said unto Joshua, this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you.* Now what could be this reproach to a people who lived amongst the Egyptians, Phenicians, and Arabians, except it was something that rendered them contemptible to these three nations? How could this reproach be taken from them? By taken off a little of the foreskin. Is not this the natural meaning of this passage?”

COMMENT. 1st, You cannot say that the foreskin was a reproach against the Jews among the Egyptians and Arabians, except you suppose that these two nations practised circumcision before the Hebrews; now of this you produce no proof. Surely, sir, to suppose this, is to beg the question.

2dly. You suppose again that circumcision was practised among the Phenicians in the time of Joshua; but our sacred writers (who probably knew them) represent them to us every where, as a people uncircumcised at all times. Have you any proofs, sir, of the contrary? You will now surely place in competition the accounts of those writers, who bordered on Phenicia, and must have had certain information of such a thing, with the testimony of Herodotus, a stranger, who lived long since their time, and who, according to yourself, when he relates what the barbarous nations among whom he travelled have told him, talks nonsense.

3dly. In the passage which you quote, it is said, *I have rolled off the reproach of Egypt from off you.* You assert that these words signify, *I have delivered you from what rendered you contemptible among the Egyptians.* But is this the true sense of this passage?

(1) The book of Joshua says. Joshua, ch. 5. v. 9.



And might we not give it a different one with equal if not more reason?

What would hinder us from supposing, as some commentators have done, that *the reproach of Egypt*, is nothing else but the slavery of Egypt, so that God might be supposed to say to the Jews, “this character, which you have now received in your flesh, makes you this day my people in an especial manner, a nation independent of every one but me, and puts the last seal to your deliverance.” Or still better, perhaps *this reproach* is the foreskin itself, which degraded the Israelites in the eyes of the Lord, by confounding them with the (1) uncircumcised and profane Egyptians. These senses, sir, are full as good as yours, altho’ you boast of it as of a great discovery.

Is not this, you say, *the natural meaning of this passage*? No, sir, it is not and cannot be; for to whom would this discourse be addressed? To the Israelites, circumcised at Gilgal? They had never lived in Egypt. Or to their fathers? They had been circumcised there; the scripture says it expressly. Therefore the foreskin never could have been a reproach to either of these among the Egyptians; and if it had been the cause of shame to their ancestors, what could have prevented them from being circumcised? God had ordered them to be so, and the Egyptians did not forbid them. Would they have willingly continued in a state of reproach, which they might so easily have avoided?

#### N I N T H E X T R A C T.

*Of Circumcision. Whether the Jews borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians.*

First we agree in this, sir, that this question does not affect the main point of revelation; for,

(1) *Uncircumcised and profane.* If this is the true sense of this passage, as plainly appears, this is a proof that then the Egyptians, at least the bulk of the nation, were yet uncircumcised. *Edit,*



(1) as you well observe, “ altho’ it were true that this  
 “ ritewas more ancient than the Jewish nation, yet  
 “ God might have sanctified it ; he may according  
 “ to his good pleasure, annex his graces to those  
 “ signs which he deigns to chuse.” According then  
 to your own confession this is merely a critical ques-  
 tion.

And accordingly learned men have been much di-  
 vided on this subject. Some, and this is the opi-  
 nion of the Jews, Arabians, and of most Christians,  
 hold that Abraham and his family used circumcision  
 before many other people ; others, and this is the  
 opinion of some learned christians, Marsham, Le  
 Clerc, &c. believe it to be of Egyptian extracti-  
 on.

You fail not to adopt this latter opinion, as it  
 seems less favourable to the Jews, and more conso-  
 nant to your prejudices against them. But permit  
 us to observe to you, sir, that you are very far from  
 defending it as ably as the persons we have menti-  
 oned. It looks false or at least uncertain in their  
 hands, but it acquires a stronger tincture of these  
 qualities in yours. So weak are your arguments on  
 this opinion.

§ 1. *A degree of improbability which the learn-  
 ed critick adds to the opinion which he maintains.*

If, as you assert, sir, the Hebrews borrowed the  
 rite of circumcision from the Egyptians, they would  
 certainly have used it in Egypt. This Le Clerc and  
 Marsham held agreeably to our sacred writings. But  
 you, sir, who do not always repose a confidence in  
 these writings, know not where or when the Jews  
 began to use this rite ; you vary with and contradict  
 yourself in this respect, in the most palpable manner ;  
 all that you know, and all that you assert against the  
 testimony of our sacred writings and against the opini-  
 ons of those learned men whose decision you adopt,  
 amounts to this,

(1) See Philosophical Dictionary. *Aut.*



TEXT. "The Jews did not receive circumcision in  
"Egypt." (Philosoph. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. Therefore the Jews, who according  
to you borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians,  
did not borrow it during their long residence in  
Egypt! They lived uncircumcised for two hundred  
and five years among the Egyptians who were cir-  
cumcised, and they did not adopt this Egyptian rite  
until forty years after their leaving Egypt, when  
they were no longer dependants on the Egyptians,  
and had no intercourse with them!

TEXT. "The foreskin was a subject of scan-  
"dal among the Egyptians." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. The Hebrews therefore, who were  
slaves in Egypt, had a strong incitement to follow  
the example of their masters; and yet, according  
to you, they did not imitate them; they lived two  
hundred and five years in the scandal of the fore-  
skin, and did not get themselves circumcised until  
the foreskin was no longer a subject of scandal!  
Can you, who find so many things above your con-  
ception, conceive this, sir?

But, perhaps, sir, every one will not conceive it  
in like manner; some people will think that this ob-  
stinacy of the Hebrews to remain two hundred and  
five years in a scandal which they could avoid, is  
not very probable, and that this is one degree more  
of improbability added to the opinion of Ce Clerc  
and Marsham, which was already not very proba-  
ble.

§ 2. *He contradicts one of the proofs alledged in  
favour of that opinion which he supports.*

TEXT. "Is it probable that the powerful and  
"ancient Egyptian people borrowed this custom  
"from a little nation which they detested? (Ibi-  
"dem)

COMMENT. This argument may have weight in  
Le Clerc and Marsham, &c. but it loses it in some



degree in your writings. You do not every where speak so advantageously of the Egyptians. You seem to have forgot this, sir; we must remind you of it. This is what you say of them;

TEXT. "The Egyptians have been much extolled; I scarcely know a more contemptible people." (Philosoph. Dict. article Apis.)

"The Egyptians, a people at all times contemptible." (Treatise on toleration.)

COMMENT. This is not the way to persuade us, sir, to think that the Jews borrowed the rite of circumcision from the Egyptians. We generally imitate a nation which we respect, not a contemptible one. You see, sir, that this contradiction destroys your argument.

Upon the whole, we cannot but admire here with what ease your imagination serves you according to your wish, and how it can give to objects those colours which you want for that instant.

If it is said that our fathers may have got some tincture of the arts and sciences, as they were brought up in the Egyptian schools, then immediately the Egyptians are the most contemptible people, at all times a contemptible people.

But if you want to shew that the Egyptians borrowed nothing from the Hebrews, then the Egyptians are a great people, an ancient and powerful nation, and Egypt a flourishing kingdom for many ages (1) before Abraham went into it, &c.

Yet, sir, it is hard to conceive how these assertions can all together be true. If the Egyptians were an ancient and powerful nation, they were not a contemptible people; or if they were a people at all times contemptible, they never were a powerful nation, or

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(1) *Before Abraham went into it.* See Philosophical Dictionary and Philosophy of History, articles Abraham, Circumcision, Egyptians, &c. Aut.



a flourishing kingdom. Contradiction will not effect conviction.

§ 3. *He supports himself with the authority of Herodotus, and overturns it.*

After the example of Le Clerc and Marsham, &c. you support your opinion with the authority of Herodotus, a Pagan historian, a Greek, not quite a cotemporary writer, but who wrote however about one thousand four hundred years after circumcision was appointed among the Hebrews, about one thousand years after Moses. This authority, as we see, would be of weight; but unfortunately you do not act as Le Clerc and Marsham have done, for you do every thing in your power to weaken this authority. This Greek is, according to you,

TEXT. "A story-teller, a relater of ridiculous fables, only fit to amuse children and be compelled by rhetoricians." (Philos. Dict.)

COMMENT. Such, sir, is the exact and veritable historian, (this name you give him thro' derision) whom you oppose to the Pentateuch, the book of Joshua, and the whole tradition of the Jews, Arabians, and Christians. Such you tell us, is the value of his testimony.

But you add, "altho' Herodotus sometimes tells hear-say stories, yet,"

TEXT. "When he speaks of what he has seen, of the customs of nations which he has examined, concerning antiquities which he has looked into, he speaks rationally."

COMMENT. Very well, sir, but had Herodotus seen the appointment of circumcision among the Hebrews, or even among the Egyptians!

No, you answer, but he had consulted. Whom? The Egyptians. We may protest against the testimony of this people, who is foolishly infatuated with its chimerical antiquities, and ridiculously jealous of the character of having been the instructors of



other nations, and of having learned (1) nothing from them. Was it their priests? You assert that every thing he heard from the Egyptian priests (2) is false.

Seriously, sir, what credit can we give to a foreign writer, of much later date, who produces none but interested witnesses, and of whom you strive so hard to give us (3) a bad opinion?

§ 4. *He gives a bad translation of that passage of Herodotus which he quotes.*

Let us now see how you translate Herodotus, after having spoke of him in terms so favourable, and so proper to gain him the confidence of your readers. In order to shew you at one glance how faithful and exact your translation is, we shall place on one side of the page what Herodotus says, and on the other what you make him say,

What Herodotus says.

The inhabitants of Colchis seem to me of Egyptian extraction; *which I collected rather from my own experience, than the information of others.* And tho' upon inquiry I found more evident marks of this relation among the Colchians than in Egypt; yet the Egyptians say, they believe them to be descended from a part of the army of Sesostris; which I

What Mr. Voltaire makes him say.

It seems that the inhabitants of Colchis came originally from Egypt: *I judge of this from myself rather than from hear-say.* For I found that when a person was interrogated at Colchis about the ancient Egyptians, *these were better remembered at Colchis than the ancient customs of Colchis in Egypt.*

(1) *Nothing from them.* See *Defense des livres de l'Ancien Testament*, an excellent work. We request of Mr Voltaire to resolve to read it. *Aut.*

(2) *Is false.* See the *Melanges*, vol. II. ch. 47. *Aut.*

(3) *A bad opinion.* See *Supra.* *Aut.*



What Herodotus says.

think probable, because their complexion is swarthy, and their hair frizzled, tho' no certain proof; for others are so likewise. But that which weighs most with me is, that the Colchians, Egyptians and Ethiopians, are the only nations of the world, who from time immemorial have been circumcised. For the Phœnicians, and *those Syrians that inhabit Palestine*, acknowledge they received circumcision from the Egyptians. As the other Syrians, who possess the countries adjacent to the river Thermodon and *Parthenion*, with their neighbours the Macronians, *confess they very lately learned the same custom from the Colchians*. And these are the only nations that are circumcised, and imitate the Egyptians in the use of this ceremony. But whether the Ethiopians had this usage from the Egyptians, or these, on the contrary, from the Ethiopians, is a thing too ancient and obscure for me to determine. Yet I

What Mr. Voltaire makes him say.

*These inhabitants of the borders of the Pontus Euxinus pretended to be a colony settled by Sesostris. For my part I guessed it, not only because they are swarthy and have their hair curled, but because the people of Colchis, Egypt, and Ethiopia are the only people on earth, who have practised circumcision at all times. For the Phenicians and those of Palestine confess that they have taken circumcision from the Egyptians. The Syrians, who live at this time on the banks of Thermodon and Parthenia, and the Macrons their neighbours, confess that they have lately conformed to this Egyptian custom. By this chiefly they are known to be originally Egyptians.*

With regard to Ethiopia and Egypt, as this ceremony is very ancient among these two nations, I cannot tell which of the two borrowed circumcision from the other; how-



What Herodotus says.

What Mr. Voltaire  
makes him say.

am inclined to believe  
that the Ethiopians took  
up this custom *by conver-*  
*sing with the Egyptians* ;  
because we see that none  
of those Phœnicians, who  
have any commerce with  
the Grecians, continue to  
imitate the Egyptians in  
this usage, of circumcising  
their children.

Littlebury's Herod.

Vol. 1. p. 193.

ever it is probable that the  
Ethiopians got it from the  
Egyptians, as on the con-  
trary the Phenicians have  
abolished the custom of  
circumcising their *new-*  
*born infants* since they have  
had any communication  
with the Greeks.

COMMENT. If it is proper to be exact and faith-  
ful in the translation of any passage, it is more espe-  
cially so when we appeal to it as an authority, and  
pretend to draw consequences from it. Do you  
think, sir, that you have rendered the text of Hero-  
dotus faithfully, and that you have not made him  
say more than what he says? Let us enter into par-  
ticulars.

*I judge of this from myself rather than from hear-say.*  
The meaning of Herodotus is, that by the (1) fea-  
tures of resemblance which he perceived between  
the inhabitants of Colchis and the Egyptians, he  
conjectured that the people of Colchis came original-  
ly from Egypt, and that this thought arose in him  
before any one had spoke to him of their Egyptian  
extraction. This is evidently the sense of the words  
*πρῶτον παρ' αὐτοῦ*, but either you have not perceived this  
sense, or you did not think proper to give it. This is  
already one instance of your want of exactness. Here  
follows something still better.

(1) *Features of resemblance.* These features were not confined to their  
swarthy complexions and curled hair. Herodotus mentions several others,  
such as the language, the manners, the method of working flax, *Edit.*



*At Colchis they remember much better the ancient Egyptians, than the ancient customs of Colchis were remembered in Egypt. Where did you find these ancient Egyptians, fir, and the ancient customs of Colchis? The text of Herodotus mentions neither.*

And what do you mean by your ancient customs of Colchis? The ancient customs of Colchis, which, according to your author, was an Egyptian colony, must have been the customs of Egypt. What, fir, did they not remember in Egypt the customs of Egypt? They did not remember in Egypt, in the time of Herodotus, circumcision, which the people of Colchis had taken from Egypt, and which the Egyptians used in the time of Herodotus? Alas, fir, how you make Herodotus reason!

Your ancient customs of Colchis therefore are not only a want of exactness, but a false sense; they are, we ask your pardon, a vacuum of sense, or to use a strong English phrase, as you admire the English, they are nonsense.

*These inhabitants of the borders of the Pontus Euxinus pretended to be a colony settled by Sesostris. The inhabitants of the borders of the Pontus Euxinus, is an elegant periphrasis to denote the Colchi; but observe, fir, that you ascribe to the Colchi what your author says of the Egyptians. In Herodotus, it is the Egyptians who pretend that the Colchi were a colony settled by Sesostris; there is some difference in this, especially if we take into consideration the vanity of the Egyptians.*

*I guessed it, not only because they are swarthy and have their hair curled, but because the people of Colchi, Egypt, &c. Here, fir, Herodotus observes that the swarthy complexion of the Colchi and their curled hair, do not prove that they were of Egyptian extraction, (1) This proves nothing he says. Why*

(1) *This proves nothing.* It must then be for want of thought, or with intent of turning Herodotus into ridicule, that the illustrious author assures



do you suppress this observation ; it is curious and interesting ; it results from this that Herodotus did not suspect what you hold for certain, that the resemblance of hair and complexion or the difference of them is a sufficient proof that men are of the same or of a different race. This is a great and mighty discovery in natural history, for which we are indebted to you ; altho' this observation, which you suppress, may have been disagreeable to you, sir, yet it might please others, and you ought not to have concealed it from them.

*The Phenicians and those of Palestine.* The Greek says, and *the Syrians of Palestine.* Thus Herodotus describes the Jews, with whose name he was scarcely acquainted ; this shews what a clear knowledge he had of the origin of their customs !

*Confess that they have taken circumcision from the Egyptians.* How did Herodotus know this ? Had he consulted them on this subject ? Does he say that he had this confession from themselves ? No, sir, and therefore we may justly except against it.

*The Syrians who live at this time on the banks of Thermodon and Parthenia.* It should be Parthenia ; this is a typographical error, which ought to be corrected in the new edition ; we inform you of it, sir, for it has passed from your Philosophical Dictionary into the book called *Raison par Alphabet.*

*Confess that they have lately conformed to this Egyptian custom.* The Greek says, this custom of the Colchi ; thus in order to establish your Egyptian notions, instead of the Colchi you put down Egypt. It is impossible to translate an author more exactly ; you may hereafter be a pattern to faithful translators !

If those Syrians of Thermodon and Parthenia were really Syrians, who had been removed out of

us (Philosophy of History, article Egypt) that Herodotus took the people of Colchis to be of Egyptian extraction, because they had a swarthy complexion and curled hair. Edit.



the kingdom of Damascus by the kings of Assyria, and sent to the extremity of the empire, their confession will prove nothing against the Jews; and if they were, as some of the learned think, part of the ten tribes which were carried off by Teglath Phalazar and Salmanazar, can we conceive that these Israelites, who had practised circumcision for so many ages, could say that they had borrowed it from their new neighbours the Colchi?

*By this chiefly they are known to be originally Egyptians.* You just now mentioned the Colchi, the Syrians of Palestine, the Syrians of Thermodon, and their neighbours the Maerons. Do you affirm, sir, that all these nations descended from the Egyptians, and that Herodotus has said it? He conjectures that the Colchi did, but he does not affirm it of the Syrians of Palestine, nor of those of Thermodon, nor of the Maerons their neighbours; he only says that by the practice of circumcision, those nations seemed to imitate the Egyptians, which certainly cannot signify that they were of Egyptian extraction. This then is a contrary sense. This is the foundation of your opinion! But, sir, contrary senses are no proofs.

This mistake surprized us at first, sir, but when we discovered the cause of it, our surprize ceased; it lies in the Latin translator, whom you follow blindly, and who misleads you. Here then you are taken in the very fact, and you can make no defence; you translate Herodotus just as you do our sacred writings from the Latin translation. Now, that a man should pretend to understand Greek, Hebrew, &c. &c. and yet translate from a Latin translation, without ever looking into the original. . . You feel, sir, what might be said of such a man; this suffices; we are Jews and must be silent, but many christian criticks (1) would not be so tame.

(1) *Would not be so tame.* See the Supplement to the Philosophy of History, the Defence of the Books of the Old Testament, &c. *Aut.*



*The Phenicians have abolished the custom of circumcising their new-born infants.* We might with good reason contest this sense, that *τὸν νεογενήτων* signifies new-born infants; and maintain that it signifies no more than children born to the Phenicians since their connexion with the Greeks; or perhaps it signifies this only, and probably still better, *their children*; this seems to be the meaning of Herodotus, and you very improperly substitute another in its room.

But we must observe to you, that if it was the Phenician custom to circumcise new-born infants, this might be another proof that they took this rite from the Hebrews, and not from the Egyptians; for the Hebrews used to circumcise their new-born infants, but the Egyptians waited until their children were thirteen or fourteen years old, to get this operation performed on them.

§ 5. *He contradicts Herodotus in a principal part of that recital on which he founds his opinion, the expedition of Sesostris.*

That Herodotus, who looks upon the expedition of Sesostris into Colchis as an undoubted fact, should believe that the Colchi descended from the Egyptians, is not matter of astonishment, these two opinions have a mutual connexion; the one explains and establishes the other. But is there not room for amazement, when we see you on one hand in the Philosophical Dictionary referring us to the authority of Herodotus, with regard to circumcision and the Egyptian extraction of the Colchi; and on the other, in your Philosophy of History denying the reality of the expedition of Sesostris? It is you say,

TEXT. “A tale, a fable, such a story as that of ‘Picrocole in Rabelas.’” (Philosophy of History. Additions, &c.)

COMMENT. You continue, sir, to treat the father of history, and his accounts in a very honourable manner! Still you use the same means to en-



gage us to respect his authority, and acquiesce in his testimony.

Sesostris's expedition is a tale, a fable, &c. Might we be so bold, sir, as to ask you why?

TEXT. "The northern nations conquered the southern, and not the southern the northern." (Universal History.)

COMMENT. This is a weak argument, which Herodotus would not have admitted, and which facts contradict, witness the Romans, the Arabians, &c.

TEXT. "Herodotus relates that Sesostris went out of Egypt with intent to conquer the whole world; now this design of conquering the whole world is one of Picrocole's projects." (Ibidim.)

COMMENT. Yes, the project of conquering the whole world as you now see it, the two hemispheres, the entire globe. But first, was the whole world known by the contemptible Egyptians? 2<sup>ld</sup>, It might be a ridiculous project to attempt the conquest of the world, of all the earth literally. But how could a writer of so much taste and learning as Mr. Voltaire, take a figurative expression literally? Every one knows that this phrase signifies no more than to extend conquests far; it is generally understood in this sense, without any absurdity; otherwise when you said that the disciples of Mahomet, *after their first victory, hoped (1) to conquer the world*, you would have said an absurd thing, which you could not do, or you would have made your heroes indulge themselves in such hopes as Picrocole had, which would be ridiculous.

Upon the whole, it is not our aim at present, to establish the certainty of the expedition of Sesostris; we shall only observe that Herodotus does not relate

(1) *To conquer the world.* See Universal History, vol. 1<sup>st</sup>, chap. 4. The illustrious writer himself explains this manner of speaking, *to conquer the whole world*; he says, that is, *to conquer the neighbouring provinces*. Now is this a ridiculous project in a powerful monarch to aim at the conquest of neighbouring nations, and to extend these conquests gradually? Edit.



it rashly and without proofs; that he produces as witnesses not only the Egyptian priests, but also the monuments which existed in his time, and which he himself had seen, those statues, those pillars of which he speaks, loaded with inscriptions in Egyptian characters, &c. that his account is confirmed by Diodorus Siculus, and by a great number of ancient writers; and that criticks of the first rank look upon this expedition as a passage of history incontestible, (1) at least in fundamentals.

But if any one can invalidate the truth of this fact, it is not you, sir. Why? Because, refusing to believe Herodotus, when he speaks of the antiquities which he has examined, as he had examined this point of history, is contradicting yourself, and acting in direct opposition to your own assertions; because to maintain circumcision and the Egyptian extraction of the Colchi, and at the same time to deny the expedition of Sesostris, is embracing an opinion, and denying that which makes it probable; because denying the expedition of Sesostris, and striving to explain circumcision and the Egyptian extraction of the Colchi by a pretended invasion of this people into Egypt, as you do, is giving up most absurdly a probable and well-attested fact, for an empty notion, a vain imagination, devoid of any sound proof; and lastly, because this pretended invasion, even were it true, would explain but ill (especially according to your principles) the origin of circumcision among the Colchi; because then it would follow that the victorious nation adopted the manners of the conquered, which you think absurd; and that they had adopted a painful rite, and according to you, a very useless one, which is incredible.

(1) *At least in fundamentals.* This is the opinion of Abbe Mignot, in the last volume of the Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Lettres. There is also to be found in it an excellent dissertation of Mr. Dupin, in answer to some difficulties proposed against this expedition by the learned author of the Origin of Arts, Sciences and Laws. See besides the Defence of Chronology against Newton's System, by Mr. Freret. We think that such authorities as these may very justly be opposed to that of Mr. Voltaire. *Anti.*



But this is enough, and perhaps too much with regard to Herodotus. You translate him ill, and you contradict him; you can therefore claim no advantage from him. Let us proceed to Josephus.

§ 6. *He charges Josephus with a confession which he does not make.*

One of the reasons which you have alledged to prove, that the Hebrews borrowed the rite of circumcision from the Egyptians, is a confession of Josephus.

TEXT. “Flavius Josephus, in his answer to Apian, lib. 2. chap. 5. expressly confesses, that the Egyptians taught other nations the rite of circumcision, as Herodotus witnesses.” (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. No, sir, Josephus does not expressly confess that the Egyptians taught other nations the rite of circumcision; he quotes Herodotus without contradicting him, for this was not his object; but he makes no confession with respect to this; the only conclusion he draws from this passage of Herodotus is, that the Jews were not absolutely unknown to this historian, which seems true.

Therefore this pretended express confession, which you ascribe to Josephus, is a mistake, or, if we dare affirm it, something worse than a mistake.

§ 7. *Other reasons which he alledges, confuted.*

To the authority of Josephus, you add that of Clemens Alexandrinus.

TEXT. “Clemens Alexandrinus relates, that when Pythagoras travelled thro’ Egypt, he was obliged to get himself circumcised, in order to be admitted into their mysteries. Therefore it was absolutely necessary to be circumcised, to be of the number of Egyptian priests.” (Philosoph. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. Yes, in the time of Pythagoras; but there is some distance of time, sir, between Pythagoras and Abraham. An interval of about one thousand two hundred years is certainly sufficient for the



introduction of a rite into a country; and this rite after one thousand years had elapsed, might have been imparted to a stranger by the priests of Egypt, as being of great antiquity. But,

TEXT. "It was necessary to be circumcised to be of the number of Egyptian priests. These priests existed when Joseph went into Egypt. The government was very ancient, and the old ceremonies of Egypt were observed with the most scrupulous exactness." (*Ibidem.*)

COMMENT. *These priests existed when Joseph went into Egypt.* But did they exist *circumcised*? The old ceremonies of Egypt were observed with the most scrupulous exactness, but was circumcision one of those old ceremonies? These things you should have proved, sir, and you have not done it.

It is certain that Joseph was circumcised when he went into Egypt; it is as clear that his brethren and their children were so likewise, and that their posterity persevered in the use of this rite, during the whole time of their residence in Egypt; therefore they did not borrow it from the Egyptians.

TEXT. "Abraham travelled thro' Egypt, which had been for a long time before a kingdom governed by a powerful king. Nothing prevents us from believing that circumcision was used for a long time in this ancient kingdom, before the Jewish nation was formed." (*Philosoph. Dictionary.*)

COMMENT. Altho' nothing prevents us from believing this, yet nothing proves it. We require proofs from you, and you say *nothing prevents*. Truly this is a convincing sort of proof!

*Nothing prevents.* But have you considered this, sir? That Abraham did not receive circumcision till twenty years after his return from Egypt, when he was ninety-nine years old. If he received this rite in order to imitate the Egyptians, why did he conform so late? Why did he not conform whilst he lived amongst them? Can any one conceive that in order to follow their example, twenty years after



he had left them, he submitted, at such an advanced age, to so dangerous an operation? Or that he adopted, as a sign of his covenant with God, and as a distinguishing character of his posterity, a rite which was a long time used in a neighbouring nation? These reasons, sir, might prevent us from believing that circumcision was at that time used in Egypt.

Add to this, that it is said in Genesis, that Abraham caused (1) all his slaves to be circumcised, and that among them there were (2) some Egyptians; that the Philistines, an Egyptian colony, are called in the scriptures, (3) uncircumcised; these are two facts from which we might conclude that circumcision was not practised by the Egyptians, either at all times, or in the time of Abraham. But,

TEXT. "Before the time of Joshua, the Israelites, even by their own confession, took many customs from the Egyptians; they imitated them in many ceremonies, in fasts, ablutions, &c. (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Without granting you, sir, that the Israelites, by their own confession, took those rites from the Egyptians, which you point out, we will allow that they borrowed some customs from them. But is this a proof that they took a rite from them, which it is doubtful whether Egypt knew before them?

§ 8. *That it is improbable that the Israelites borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians.*

You have therefore produced no convincing proof that our fathers borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians. So far from rendering this opinion of Marsham's more probable, you have involved it in new difficulties. Your notions concerning the practice of circumcision among the Hebrews are uncertain and false, your assertions concerning the Egyptians contradictory, the authority of Herodotus sub-

(1) *All his slaves.* See Genesis, ch. 17. v. 27. *Aut.*

(2) *Some Egyptians.* See Genesis, ch. 13. v. 16. *Aut.*

(3) *Uncircumcised.* 1st book of Kings, ch. d7. v. 26. ch. 18. v. 24. &c. *Aut.*



verted by yourself, his text falsely rendered, a contrary meaning given to that of Joshua, the testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus is foreign to the question, &c. Such reasons, sir, cannot counterbalance the regular tradition of the Jews and Arabians, two nations who, notwithstanding their hereditary antipathy towards each other, agree in looking upon this rite as instituted by their common father.

To this tradition, let us add those texts of scripture in which the appointment of this ceremony is related, and those wherein it seems announced as a sign to distinguish the sons of Jacob from the Canaanites, the Philistines and (1) uncircumcised Egyptians.

In short, this rite has among the Hebrews a clear origin, a reasonable motive, a constant usage; it goes up incontestibly to the common father of the nation; it has a reasonable motive, for it is the seal of God's covenant with the patriarch, and a pledge of the blessing of the Lord on his posterity; it has a constant usage, except during the forty years which they spent in the wilderness; the Jews have practised this rite without interruption, from the time of Abraham to this day.

Of the Egyptians so much cannot be said; the origin of this rite among them is so uncertain, that Herodotus cannot determine whether they took it from the Ethiopians, or the Ethiopians from them. You yourself confute the various motives for this strange ceremony which are ascribed to them, health, cleanliness, fruitfulness; and that which you substitute in the place of these, altho' it is more ingenious, is not more rational. Even the practice of this rite has varied so much among the Egyptians, that it is equally impossible to determine the time in which it began and ended; and that it is uncertain whether the whole nation adopted it, or when it did,

(1) *Uncircumcised Egyptians.* All these texts have been quoted above.  
Aut.



or when it was restrained to the priests and the initiated only.

Is it probable, sir, that a nation which practised circumcision universally, invariably, constantly, during more than thirty centuries, thro' a motive which alone could render this practise reasonable, borrowed it from a nation, which used it so short a time with so many variations, and for so many foolish reasons?

§ 9. *From whence the Egyptians took circumcision.*

But you will say, from whence then did the Egyptians borrow circumcision? From whence you please, sir; it concerns us but little to know this, and we think that there can be little more than conjectures with regard to it.

Some of the learned affirm that the Egyptians received this rite from their priests, and that these priests got it from Joseph. It is certainly not improbable that the Egyptian priest imitated a rite which was used by a prime minister in favour, whose great wisdom they admired, and to whom they were indebted for the preservation of their property and privileges. This would not have been the case of masters imitating their slaves.

Others rather suppose, and we join them, that the Egyptians borrowed this rite from the Arabians, descendants of Abraham; for these Arabians ruled over Egypt for a time; and it is not wonderful to see the conquered people following the customs of their masters. The account of Clemens Alexandrinus gives still greater weight to this supposition, for he says that the Egyptian circumcision bears a much stronger resemblance to that of the Arabians than (1) to that of the Jews.

Such are our thoughts, sir, on the origin of circumcision among the Egyptians and the Jews. Are

(1) *To that of the Jews.* The Jews circumcised and do still circumcise their children the eighth day after their birth. The Egyptians did it later as well as the Arabians, generally in the thirteenth year. *Aut.*



you still fond of your opinion ? Rest in it then. But if you want to persuade your readers to rest in it too, endeavour to support it with better proofs, and do not take away their force by contradicting them ; but especially, as you rely on the testimony of Herodotus, speak better of him, and translate him more faithfully.

## T E N T H E X T R A C T.

*Of Solomon ; of his elevation to the throne, and of the extent of his dominions.*

If in your Philosophy of History, whilst you are speaking of the different Jewish states, you are silent with respect to Solomon, altho' he might have been brought in naturally enough, yet your readers are upon the whole at no loss ; for we find a long article upon this king of the Jews in your Philosophical Dictionary.

You first allow, that *Solomon was always revered in the East ; that the works which are ascribed to him, the annals of the Jews, the fables of the Arabians have borne his name as far as the Indies, and that his reign is the grand period of the Hebrews.*

But however the splendour of his reign, the high reputation of the monarch, the opinions of the Jews and Arabians are of little weight with you. If we believe you, this revered monarch was a bloody usurper, his vast empire a petty state, and the works which are ascribed to him, are neither his (1) nor worthy of him. This is the substance of what you say of a king whose name has been blazoned thro' the world.

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(1) *Nor worthy of him.* It is hard to conceive how writings, which are not Solomon's, nor worthy of him, can have raised his character so universally. The name of a great monarch, placed at the head of his works, may gain them celebrity, but it seems paradoxical that books, unworthy of a great monarch, should raise his character. We must request that the illustrious writer will solve this paradox. *Edit.*



It would be tedious now to enter into all these particulars; and we are informed that (1) a learned Christian is preparing a full answer to them; we shall therefore confine ourselves to some points which appear striking to us.

§ 1. *Elevation of Solomon to the throne.*

Was the elevation of Solomon to the throne an usurpation? This is your notion of it.

TEXT. "Bethsabé prevailed on David to get her son Solomon crowned instead of his elder brother Adonias." (Philosoph. Dict.)

COMMENT. It was the opinion of the (2) great Bossuet, that in our nation, as well as in yours, kings succeeded one another in the male and elder lines; an order of succession, which he says, was (3) wisely instituted for the prevention of civil wars, and of (4) the dominion of foreigners in those states.

But you suppose that this order was so well established in the time of David, that the throne rightfully belonged to the eldest son, independently of the appointment of God, and of the father's will. This, sir, you should have proved, before you accused Solomon of usurpation and injustice; and it would be hard for you we think to produce good proofs of it.

It appears on the contrary, that David founded Solomon's right and his own on the choice of the Lord. *Howbeit the Lord God of Israel (5) chose me before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel. And of all my sons he hath chosen Solomon to sit upon the*

(1) *A learned Christian.* The Abbe Nonnote. We are assured that he will soon publish a complete refutation of the Philosophical Dictionary. If we may form a judgment of this future work, by his excellent piece of criticism on the Universal History, it will be a very solid refutation. *Edit.*

(2) *Great Bossuet.* See his *Politique sacrée.*

(3) *Wisely instituted.* The author of the Philosophical Dictionary thinks very differently from Bossuet on this subject, as well as on many others. If the people of France would follow his advice, they would soon reform the Salick law. See the Philosophical Dictionary, article Laws. *Aut.*

(4) *The dominion of foreigners.* The law forbade the Hebrews to take a king of any other nation. *Non poteris alterius gentis hominem regem facere qui non sit frater tuus.* This was a wise and necessary regulation among this people. *Edit.*

(5) *Chose me.*—



*throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel.* The order of succession was, so far from being settled at that time, that Bathshabé scruples not to say to David, *And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldst tell them who shall sit* (1) *on the throne of Israel after thee.* And in consequence of this, as soon as David had named his successor, and that Solomon had been anointed by his order, all Israel acknowledged him as (2) their lawful king. Do you flatter yourself with being a better judge of the right of succession to the crown in our nation, than the nation itself?

TEXT. “She had art enough to get the inheritance given to the fruit of her adultery.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. We imagined that the fruit of Bethshabé’s adultery had died a few days after its birth; and that the Lord, moved by the strong and sincere repentance of David, had legitimated this marriage, which commenced by a crime. More inexorable than the God of our fathers, you determine that the tears and sorrows of this penitent monarch deserved no sort of indulgence. Such is the rigour or rather inflexibility of your justice.

TEXT. “Nathan who had gone to upbraid David for his adultery, was the same man who seconded Bethshabé’s application for placing Solomon on the throne. This conduct, if we only reason according to the flesh, would prove that this Nathan had, according to circumstances, divers weights and measures.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Yes, sir, Nathan had two measures, one measure of rigour against an adulterous and murdering king, and another of indulgence for a pe-

(1) *On the throne of Israel.* 1st book of Chronicles, chap. 28. v. 4, and 5. and 1st book of Kings, ch. 1. v. 20.

(2) *Their lawful king.* Even since the time of David some of our kings chose for their successors, among their children, others than their first born, and the nation acknowledged them as lawful sovereigns. When, therefore, Adonias says to Bethshabé, *the crown belonged to me*, he speaks of the common order of succession, and not of an absolute right or established law, which deprived the father of the right of appointing his successor. *Edit.*



nitent and contrite sinner. Would he be more equitable who would appoint the same measure for a crime, and for repentance after having committed it?

§ 2. *Death of Adonias.*

His death you think unjust, sir, and in order to prove it such, you say,

TEXT. “ Adonias, after he was excluded from the throne by Solomon, asked him as a singular favour, permission to marry Abisag, that young girl which had been given to David to keep him warm in his old age; and the scripture says, that merely for this request Solomon caused him to be assassinated.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *Asked him as a singular favour.* But observe what the eloquent Bishop of Meaux says, “ This favour was of infinite consequence from the manners of this people; in these manners Adonias was forming a new title to the crown. Why do you not ask the throne for him, (says he to Beth-sabé) he is already the eldest? &c.”

*Merely for this request.* No, sir, the scripture had already shewn the haughty character of Adonias, the project he had formed of seizing the crown without the king's consent, or rather against it, and even during his father's life, his connections with Joab, a dangerous man, of whom David had often had just reason to complain, &c. Therefore it was not merely *for this request* to marry Abisag, that Solomon caused him to be put to death; it was on account of this request, added to the knowledge of his cabals and pretensions which he wanted to strengthen by this new title.

TEXT. “ Probably God who had given him the gift of wisdom, denied him then the gift of justice and humanity. (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. When you charged Solomon with the want of justice and humanity, did you possess the gift of discretion, sir?



Far be it from us, sir, to justify crimes. If Solomon caused his brother to be put to death, without just reasons of personal security, or for the good of the state, (1) he was surely guilty. But are you sure that he had none of these reasons? Consider, sir, that according to the manners of that age and country, if the designs of Adonias had succeeded, (2) Solomon and his mother would have been in the highest danger. And how can you tell but this sacrifice, which must have rent Solomon's heart, was offered up for the tranquillity of his country, and the peace of his subjects? The character of Adonias, the number of his partizans, his past intrigues, and his late attempt might have caused Solomon to fear, if he had spared his life, the involving his people in the horrors of blood and civil war; the justice and humanity of kings often oblige them to be severe.

We think that if you had reflected on these things, you would not have been so hasty in condemning a great and wise monarch, whose reasons and secret views you was not acquainted with.

§ 3. *Extent of Solomon's dominions.*

You add, sir, that the scripture contradicts itself in speaking of Solomon's dominions.

TEXT. "It is said, in the third book of Kings, that he was master of a great kingdom, which extended from the Euphrates to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. All this is said, sir, and all this is true. But you add,

TEXT. "Unfortunately it is said at the same time, that the king of Egypt had conquered the country of Gazer in Canaan, and that he gave the city of Gazer to his daughter as a portion, whom, they say, Solomon married." (Ibidem.)

(1) *He was surely guilty.* We shall not deny that some commentators censure Solomon, but they give different reasons from Mr. Voltaire's, and these reasons have always appeared very weak to us. *Aut.*

(2) *Solomon and his mother.* &c. See 1st Book of Kings, ch. i. v. 12. and 21. *Save your life and that of your son,* says Nathan to Bethsabé, &c. *Aut.*



COMMENT. *Unfortunately* for you, sir, you sometimes see contradictions where there are none, and you often do not see them where they are really to be found.

When the Hebrews conquered Palestine, the Canaanites of Gazer remained in possession of this city, but however still as their vassals and tributaries; the scripture expressly says it; they had lived thus under David, and did so now under Solomon; Gazer therefore had been part of his dominions, before the king of Egypt (1) (probably with Solomon's consent) besieged it, and took it. After this victory Pharaoh gave up his conquest to the king of Israel, whom he constituted by this cession proprietor in chief, instead of Lord Paramount; and this cession made by the king of Egypt was really part of his daughter's portion.

*Whom they say Solomon married, &c.* We maintain it from our annals. Have you any proof to the contrary, sir?

TEXT. "There was a king at Damascus, the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon, were in a flourishing state." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Yes; but the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon, tho' powerful by sea, possessed only a Cape on the continent; and the king of Damascus, having been conquered by David, had been tributary to him, and was so now to Solomon; these two Jewish kings kept garrisons in Damascus; they were masters of this country as far as the Euphrates, and possessed it so fully, that Solomon caused the famous city of Tadmor or Palmyra to be built there; therefore the king of Damascus; and the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon did not prevent Solomon's dominions from extending from the Euphrates to the

(1) *Probably with Solomon's consent.* We imagine that after David's death the people of Gazar thought it a fit opportunity for shaking off the new king's yoke, and that it was in order to assist him that Pharaoh, his ally and father in law, laid siege to this city. *Aut.*



Red Sea, and from Arabia deserta to the Mediterranean. Now we do not think this extent of country so small a state; some celebrated nations have had smaller dominions.

But you will ask, are these mighty conquests of David credible? How can we believe, for instance, that,

TEXT. “Saul who at first had but two swords  
“in his whole dominions, soon raised an army of  
“three hundred and thirty thousand men. The  
“Turkish Sultan never had such numerous armies?  
“they were sufficient for conquering the whole  
“world.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *An army of three hundred and thirty thousand men.* You have been often told, sir, that in these ancient times, every man who could bear arms was a soldier; therefore an army of this number was not a thing so impossible and inconceivable as you imagine.

*The Turkish Sultan never had such numerous armies.* It seems, sir, to be a long time since you have read the history of the Turks, but do you never get news-papers read to you?

*They were sufficient for conquering the whole world.* The world! This is saying much, sir, the world is very large.

You have made so many agreeable and ingenious jests on the project of Sesostris, and on the hopes you give the Jews of *conquering the whole world!* And you begin to talk in their stile of *conquering the world!*

TEXT. “These contradictions seem to exclude all kind of reasoning; but those who wish  
“to reason find it extraordinary that David, who succeeded Saul after he was vanquished by the Philistines, should have been able, during his reign,  
“to found a vast empire.” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *Those who wish to reason, &c.* But, sir, is it reasoning to think it extraordinary that



the successor of a king, defeated in battle, should have gained many victories and conquered many provinces? This is pronouncing a fact incredible, of which there are a thousand instances in history. How many nations, after learning the art of war by defeats, have triumphed over their conquerors!

*Should have been able during his reign.* But this reign was long; David's conquests were the fruit of forty years battles and victories; is it impossible that a warlike king, by so many labours and victories, should have extended his dominions?

*These contradictions seem to exclude all reasoning.* And will not such reasonings at last exclude all faith? Beware, sir; the public begins to be clear-sighted, and to be weary of having been so long the dupe of a great name; it is gradually withdrawing a confidence which it too freely gave.

#### E L E V E N T H E X T R A C T .

It seems, sir, you are resolved to dispute Solomon his *proverbs*, as well as his dominions.

We do not pretend to say that this work is entirely Solomon's; the very title of the two last chapters shews the contrary; and we are sensible that many learned men look upon it only as a collection of sentences and maxims extracted, for the most part, out of this prince's works; and for the remainder out of several other inspired writers. We may boldly affirm that this collection was made by the prophet Isaiah, by Helcias, or as you say, by Sobna, Eliakim, Joachim, &c. under the reign of the pious king Hezekiah. We see nothing in all this but truth, or at least probability, nothing but what your readers might learn, and which you have very probably learned yourself in Don Calmet's comment.

But you go a step farther; you undertake to prove that this work is unworthy of Solomon, and that it



was composed in Alexandria. Let us now see, sir, your foundation for these two assertions.

§ 1. *Whether the book of proverbs is a work unworthy of Solomon.*

You begin in these terms,

TEXT. "this work is a collection of trivial, low, incoherent maxims, without taste, choice or design." [Philosoph. Dict.]

COMMENT. *A collection of low, trivial, incoherent maxims.* But first, altho' some two or three sentences, which you quote, were low, what conclusion could you draw from these against so many others? Can one judge of such a work, as he would of a piece of stuff, by a pattern? If we were to judge in the same manner of your works, if we were to quote some bad lines, some flat jests, and thence conclude that the whole is unworthy of a great poet and an excellent writer, would you think this fair dealing.

Besides, what may appear low and trivial to some persons in certain languages, and certain times and countries, may very possibly not have appeared so in other countries, times and languages. Very little reading will convince us of this. Homer alone can supply us with many such instances. How many thoughts, images, and descriptions are there, which in his time and language were noble and elegant, but would now appear low in yours! But ancient writers are not to be tried by your language and manners, but by their own language, by the customs and manners of those ages and countries in which they lived. We have often said this, and you yourself have often repeated it!

In short, sir, men of taste, writers who were judges of style, and who had the advantage of being able to read the book of Proverbs in the original, have given a very different opinion of it. These maxims, in which you can find nothing but what is low and trivial, seem to them to be written with a poignant pre-



cision, in a pure and elegant style, and adorned with such sentiments, images, and comparisons, as were proper for fixing them in the minds of those readers, for whose instruction they were intended. Fenelon and Bossuet have passed this judgment on it; and if you want foreign authorities, Louth and Michaelis, criticks whose taste and learning you cannot object to, are of the same opinion.

*These maxims are incoherent.* A fine discovery indeed, and just grounds for censure! Surely every one knows that in this work, especially after the nine first chapters, the didactic order is not observed, and that we find in it no divisions, definitions, argumentations, in short no logical method. But was this needful? Solomon did not propose to write a dry, cold Philosophical treatise; he was writing for young people of both sexes, who love variety, and are sooner taken by detached thoughts which strike them, than by long-winded tedious reasonings.

You find these maxims *incoherent*; but do you see more coherence in the sentences of Theognis, Phocylides, Cato, Publius Syrus, &c.? And have you less value for these compositions, or do you think them unworthy of their authors, because they were written without method, or collected by chance?

*Maxims without choice, taste or design.* It is true they are not written in the taste of certain modern thoughts; but is this modern taste the true one? And is it so exclusively to all others? Solomon's thoughts; are neither epigrammatical nor high flown; he does not assume the tone of an oracle, nor wrap himself up in the darkness of ambiguous diction. Was it his duty to do so? His object was to instruct, and he knew that perplexity and obscurity are enemies to instruction.

As to the want of design, which you charge this work with, altho' all its parts are not connected by a regular and uniform plan, yet a common object unites



them, and this object, surely worthy of a wise and great prince, is so clear, that it cannot be overlooked; it is to train up his young readers to piety, prudence, an exact observance of every duty, in a word to instil the fear of God into them, and to lead them to happiness by virtue; and in the midst of these great views, you come and cavil about the want of regularity in the plan, as if you did know that this sort of regularity so much cried up by the moderns, was for a long time neglected by the ancient moral poets, even the Romans and the Greeks.

You must allow, sir, that there is much shallowness, and very little solidity in all these objections.

But here follows something more serious.

TEXT. “ We find whole chapters which speak  
“ of nothing but of strumpets, who invite passen-  
“ gers to lie with them. Would Solomon have  
“ said so much of the prostitute?” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Why not speak of the prostitute? He does it to warn men against her wilds, to point out the shameful and pernicious consequences of fornication, and to deter young men from plunging into that abyss. Is this a design unworthy of the wise?

TEXT. “ Can we conceive that a learned mo-  
“ narch could write a collection of maxims, a-  
“ mongst which there cannot be found one that re-  
“ spects the manner of governing, politicks, the  
“ customs of a court, the character of courtiers?” (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. We might previously answer you, sir, that as Solomon wrote many books, he perhaps treated in some other one of politicks, the customs of a court, the character of courtiers; that therefore it would have been needless to repeat the same things in this one; that his sole object here was to give some general precepts to youth of virtue and wisdom, and that according to this plan it was unnecessary for him to speak of politicks and government;



we cannot see how you could reasonably object to this answer.

But is it very certain that in this collection of sentences, there is not really one which respects government, politicks, &c? You affirm it, sir, and we will venture to deny it. Of what kind are the following maxims, *When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. Righteousness exalteth a nation. The king by judgment establisheth the land, but he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness. In the multitude of the people is the king's glory. The prince that wanteth understanding, is also a great oppressor. If a ruler hearken to lies all his servants are wicked*; that is, they are unjust, void of truth, enemies to the publick good? Do not these maxims respect the manner of governing?

The eloquent Bossuet has made this remark in that noble preface which is at the head of his work on the book of Proverbs. "We find, he says, so many sage maxims of policy and government in this book, that we easily discover in it the wisdom of a king highly accomplished in the art of governing." You see, sir, this is quite the contrary of what you say. Whence then this opposition between you and this learned prelate? It proceeds from this, that Bossuet speaks of this work, after having studied it, and you speak of it probably without having read it, or at least after having read it with so much haste and negligence, that you do not even know the contents of it. And is it after such a superficial perusal, that you take upon you to decide whether it is worthy or unworthy of Solomon? Really, sir, you are a very extraordinary critick!

§ 2. *Whether the book of Proverbs was composed in Alexandria.*

But perhaps you may have better success in proving that the book of Proverbs was composed in Alexandria.



TEXT. "Would Solomon have said, look not on  
 "the wine when it appears clear and sparkles in the  
 "glafs? I very much doubt whether they had  
 "drinking glaffes in Solomon's time; it is a very  
 "late invention, and this very passage shews that  
 "this Jewish rhapsody, as well as many other Jewish  
 "books, was composed in Alexandria." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Pardon us, sir, if we say that here is  
 a great deal of learning thrown away.

1st, If it is certain that the invention of drinking  
 glaffes is of very late date, and that they were first  
 known in Alexandria, it is not sufficient to doubt  
 whether they had drinking glaffes in Solomon's time,  
 for they certainly had none; you know it well.

2dly, But what would you think if, merely to  
 puzzle you, we should maintain, that you have no  
 certainty that drinking glaffes were first known in  
 Alexandria? And really, sir, this assertion would  
 not be altogether ungrounded. We could tell you,  
 that altho' learned men have held, that the transpar-  
 ent cups or bowls, which the Greek ambassadors saw  
 at the Persian court, a long time before Alexander,  
 were of amber or porcelain, yet others have main-  
 tained, that they were of glafs; that glafs, according  
 to the account of many (1) ancient writers, Pliny,  
 Tacitus, &c. was invented in Palestine, on the bor-

(1) *Ancient writers.* Most ancient writers ascribe the invention of glafs  
 to an happy chance; they tell us that some merchants who dealt in nitre,  
 having gone on shore on the banks of the river Belus, and being willing to  
 dress their food, for want of stones, used large pieces of nitre to support their  
 wood and their pots, that this nitre having taken fire dissolved itself in the  
 sand, and thus formed the first glafs. This is nearly the same account that  
 Pliny gives. Lib 36. chap. 26.

Fama est, (*says he speaking of the river Belus,*) appulsa navi mercatorum ni-  
 tri, cum sparsi per littus epulas pararent, nec esset cortinis attollendis lapidum  
 occasio, glebas nitri e novi subdidisse, quibus accensis, permixta arena, trans-  
 lucentes novi liquoris fluxisse rivos, & hanc fuisse originem vitri.

Tacitus also speaks of the glafs houses of the Sidonians, and of the sands of  
 Belus. Et Belus ammis, (*says he*) Judaico illabitur mari circa cujus os col-  
 lectæ arenæ, admixto nitro, in vitrum incoquantur.—Sidon artifex vitri,  
 vitriarius officinis nobilis. History liber, 5th, &c.

It was believed for a long time, that glafs could not be made without the  
 sands of Belus. According to Josephus, vessels were to have been freighted  
 with it. This false supposition, which it was the interest of the Tyrians and  
 Sidonians to encourage, made glafs for a long time exceedingly dear. *Edm.*



ders of the river Belus; that the first materials used for making it, were the sands of this river, which flows at the foot of mount Carmel, in one of our tribes; that Isaiah speaks of it, Ezekiel alludes to it; that even in Solomon's time they made inlaid floors of it in the Mosaick way; and that to go up still higher, it was not unknown in the days of Moses and Job, &c. If it was needful, proofs at least plausible, (1) of all these assertions might be produced to you.

3dly, It is not necessary to enter into such deep enquiries, to overturn your argument; one reflection suffices, and it is this; your argument supposes, that in the original text, a drinking glass is meant, a cup or bowl of glass. Now altho' the French translations and the vulgate, have rendered the Hebrew word by *glass*, yet this word signifies neither a drinking glass nor a cup of glass, but a cup or bowl of any substance. Therefore your pretended demonstration amounts to this; "The French translations  
" and the vulgate render this passage by glass; now  
" drinking glasses were first known in Alexandria,  
" therefore the Hebrew text, which does not speak  
" of glass, was composed in Alexandria." Thus from French and Latin translations which speak of glass, you draw a conclusion against the Hebrew text which does not mention it. Did any one ever reason thus, sir? See what danger there is in playing the critick on a work without inspecting the original, or without understanding it.

(1) *Of all these assertions.* See the learned Dissertation of Mr. Michaelis, vol. III. of the Memoirs of the Academy of Gottingen, on the antiquity of glass among the Hebrews. He observes in it, that Ezekiel places a sea of glass under the throne of God, in allusion to that magnificent sea of glass, with which the place was paved where Solomon placed his throne; that Isaiah, speaking of the city of Tyre, and Moses, of the tribes of Issachar and of Zabulon, boast of *the treasures hidden in the sands of their shores*; by which he understands, with the Caldaick interpreters, Jonathan, Solomon Ben-Isaac, Le Clerc, &c. the wealth which would flow into them from the manufactures of glass, in which they used the sands of the river Belus. Lastly, that the words *Zag* and *Zaguchit*, which are found in Moses and Job, are rendered in all the oriental versions, by a word which signifies in those languages, *glass*. *Aut.*



We had gone so far, when upon comparing the Dictionnaire Philosophique, with the Raïson par Alphabet, we found these words at the bottom of the page,

TEXT. "A certain pedant thinks he has discovered an error in this passage; he pretends that we have ill translated by the word *glass* a goblet, which was, he says, of wood or metal." (Raïson par Alphabet.)

COMMENT. *A certain pedant!* We are not acquainted with this author or with his work; but to judge of him merely by what you say, we cannot but suppose him a man of learning, who does not translate from the vulgate, but consults and understands the text.

*A certain pedant.* They say that in your language this is a word of abuse. The abusive style is a bad one. We are sorry to see you falling into it so often. Practise as you preach, sir. Substitute at last good reasons in the place of invectives.

*A certain pedant thought.* No, sir, he did not *think* he had found it, for he really found it; and it is not a slight mistake, but a gross blunder. It is a misfortune, that a pedant should be right, and Mr. Voltaire wrong! And yet this little accident has often happened to you.

*He pretends that we have ill translated, &c.* Rather he has demonstrated it, and you have no reasonable answer to make. And yet you reply;

TEXT. "How could the wine sparkle in a goblet of metal or wood? And besides, what matter?"

COMMENT. Are not you aware, sir, that by this assertion you affirm, that no ancient people could tell whether their wine sparkled or was bright? For according to you, they drank out of cups of wood or metal. And do you think, sir, that even your contemporaries, who drink out of golden goblets or silver cups, cannot distinguish whether their wine is bright and sparkles.



*And besides what matter?* Certainly we are as indifferent about this matter as you are; but we think that this false translation of the Hebrew word is of some consequence to you, for if the word does not signify *glass*, your pretended demonstration dwindles into an argument equally false and ridiculous. Perhaps you are very indifferent about this matter, and so are we. In truth, what matter?

No, sir, it matters not to us. We know at last your secret, sir, you have disclosed it, and it has reached us. *Abbé, I must be read, no matter whether I am believed?* Is this then your motto, sir? May it at last be known to all those who read you, and are kind enough to believe you! Had we known this secret sooner, we might have saved ourselves the trouble of writing. This motto should be placed at the head of your works.

#### T W E L F T H   E X T R A C T.

*Of Solomon, the sequel. Calculation of his riches, his horses, &c.*

There are no difficulties which you propose against our sacred writings with greater confidence, than those which you take from some calculations that may be found in them. And yet these difficulties are neither new nor unanswerable. You have not been at great trouble to find them out; you have not been obliged to turn over the leaves of Woolston and Toland, Bolingbroke and Collins, &c. Two or three commentators, perhaps Calmet alone, your old master, supplied you with them. All you had to do was just to copy them over, to season them with some strokes of humour, and to suppress the answers. And this is really all you have done in treating of the riches of Solomon, of his horses, &c. &c. in your Philosophical Dictionary, and in other places. We propose to be more impartial, sir; for we will produce the answers without attempting in any degree to weaken the difficulties.



§ 1. *Of the wealth left to Solomon by David.*

TEXT. " David, whose predecessor had not  
" even iron, left his son Solomon twenty-five thou-  
" sand six hundred forty-eight millions of livres in  
" specie, according to our common computation.  
(*Melanges.*)

" Could Solomon be so rich as is said? (1) the  
" *Chronicles* assure us that the † Melk David his  
" father, left him (2) about twenty thousand mil-  
" lions of our money, according to the common  
" computation, and the most moderate calculation.  
" There is not so much ready money on the face of  
" the earth; and it is hard to conceive how David  
" could lay up such a treasure in the small country  
" of Palestine?" (*Dict. Phil.*)

COMMENT. We shall first observe that in the *Me-  
langes*, the sum left to Solomon by David amounts  
to twenty-five thousand six hundred forty-eight mil-  
lions, and that in the *Dictionary* it amounts only to  
about twenty thousand millions. There is there-  
fore in this latter account an abatement of five thou-  
sand six hundred forty-eight millions of livres; this  
difference deserves well to be noted; a fifth more  
or less is a considerable thing in a sum.

We are told that in this last account the most mo-  
derate calculations is followed. This is a proof that  
the former one was not very moderate. It is also a  
proof that all these calculations are (3) not of indis-  
putable evidence.

But suppose your valuations were just, altho' this  
might be disputed; we will grant too, that you have

3 K

(1) *The Chronicles.* Here follows the text according to the vulgate, *Ecce ego  
in paupertate mea præparavi impensus domus domini auri talenta centum millia, &  
argenti millia talentorum.* *Chronicles* chap. 22. v. 14. *Aut.*

† Melk signifies a petty king.

(2) *About twenty thousand millions.* In the *Treatise on Toleration*, Mr.  
Voltaire reduces the sums left by David to nineteen thousand and sixty-two  
millions, altho' he includes in this the sums which this prince's officers con-  
tributed towards the construction of the temple. All these variations evi-  
dently shew that these calculations are uncertain. *Aut.*

(3) *Not of indisputable evidence.* For this reason Calmet makes the sum  
left by David amount only to about twelve thousand millions. *Aut.*



a perfect knowledge of the exact value of those talents of which the vulgate speaks in this place, which is doubtful; let us grant you all this, sir, and what will follow, that it is incredible that David could leave such a sum to his son? But who obliges you to believe it?

These twenty thousand millions appear to you an enormous, an exorbitant sum. You are right, and we join you in opinion; such a sum would suffice to build a temple of (1) massy silver; at least it would suffice to build several hundreds of temples such as that of Solomon, especially if it was such a temple as you represent it.

But observe, sir, that the grosser the mistake is, and the more glaring the absurdity, the less likely it is that it should come from an author to whom one cannot but grant, if not inspiration, yet at least some knowledge. Is it probable that a sensible writer could make David say, (a prince whose predecessor he knew as well as you had not iron,) that he had laid up according to his poverty twenty thousand millions in specie, that is, according to yourself, more ready money than there is in the whole world?

When such evident mistakes, with regard to numbers, are found in profane writers, they are generally not charged with them, if they are known to have been authors of the least knowledge or veracity. Every critick will in this case think it his duty to ascribe them rather to the neglect or inattention of the copier, than to the (2) stupid weakness of the writer. And why would you not practice the same equity, and follow the same rules with respect to our sacred writers?

(1) *Of massy silver.* And yet as Mr. Voltaire observes this sum left by David, was not sufficient for Solomon, who was obliged to borrow gold from Hiram besides. *Aut.*

(2) *Stupid weakness of the writers.* These mistakes may be found not only in ancient writers, whose works have been so often copied over, but even in the most celebrated modern writers. Basnage supplies us with an extraordinary instance of this. It is said in his History of the Jews, that the Spanish Jews upon their expulsion, carried away with them thirty thousand



You are still more strongly bound to this, because probably the copiers sometimes used letters, according to our custom, in lieu of numerical figures, to denote numbers, and that the Hebrew letters according to you (1) are easily confounded.

What then does your objection prove? This at most, that the copiers have made a mistake in this text of the Chronicles. But who says that there have not been mistakes in our sacred writings? Every body allows it, and you have lost much time in proving what (2) nobody doubts.

With respect to the rest, sir, in the time of David, as well as now, it was usual for the monarchs of Asia to lay up treasures against the time of need, or for the purpose of executing some plan then in prospect. They were unacquainted with (3) the new principle of modern governments, that it is better for princes to be poor, and to let all the ready money circulate thro' the nation. Therefore it is not surprising, that as David had long formed the design of building

millions of ducats! This is written in letters, not numbers, and is not corrected in the errata; would any reasonable man impute this exaggeration to Basnage rather than to his Dutch printers? *Edit.*

(1) *Are easily confounded.* We might add, in order to shew that this is a mistake of the copiers, 1st, That in this part of the Hebrew text, the grammatical construction is very irregular, or at least extraordinary. 2dly, That in the Arabick version, they reckon one thousand talents of gold, and one thousand of silver, which shews that there is a different reading in the Arabian translator's manuscript, from the manuscript which the author of the vulgate used. And this gives room manifestly for suspecting an alteration in both manuscripts. *Edit.*

(2) *Nobody doubts.* Mr. Voltaire himself could not help allowing this in his Treatise of Toleration. See page 127. *Aut.*

(3) *The new principle.* The contrary principle was that of Sixtus Quintus, and Henry the IV. whose views were certainly as wise as those of our modern political economists. This principle was also adopted by the late king of Prussia. The present king has profited well by it.

It would perhaps be a subject not unworthy the enquiries of the learned, to investigate whether there was not in ancient times as much gold and silver in proportion in the world as there is now. It seems that their possessing in ancient times so many golden sands, so many rivers which rolled gold, so many mines which they found out and worked, might render the question at least problematical. It is impossible to read Don Calmet's dissertation on the texts which we are examining, without confessing that in those ancient times, kings, temples, and certain cities, must have been amazingly rich. Mr. Voltaire observes himself in his Treatise of Toleration, that the reader is astonished at the riches which Herodotus says he saw in the temple of Ephesus. But does this astonishment entitle us to deny the fact? *Edit.*



a superb temple for the Lord, during many years of a prosperous reign, after so many victories gained over so many nations, from whom he had carried off rich spoils, he should have been able to lay up, and leave to his son considerable sums. For notwithstanding what you say, sir, this Melk David was not a petty king, but a powerful monarch. And when you circumscribe his dominions, within the small country of Palestine, you wish to forget that this victorious prince had subdued many neighbouring nations, and extended his dominions from the Euphrates to Esiongeber, and from Esiongeber to Egypt. This was something more than the small country of Palestine.

§ 2. *Of Solomon's Horses.*

TEXT. "Solomon had forty thousand stables, and so many coach houses for his chariots, twelve thousand stables for his saddle horses, &c. Commentators confess that these facts want explanation, and suspect that the copiers have committed some errors in the numerical figures." (Melanges, Vol. 5th of the Geneva edition, chap. 1st.)

"Solomon, according to the third book of Kings, had forty thousand stables for the horses of his chariots; suppose each stable contained but ten horses, this would have made up the number of four hundred thousand horses, which added to his twelve thousand saddle horses, makes up four hundred and twelve thousand war horses. This is a great deal for a Jewish Melk, who never waged war. There are few instances of such magnificence in a country which feeds nothing but asses, and in which there are at this time no other beasts of burthen; but probably times are changed." (Philos. Dictionary, article Solomon.)

COMMENT. Here is a great deal of humour; but shall we not have reason to laugh a little at the jester, when it shall appear that he translates this passage of the third book of Kings from the Latin of the Vulgate, and that even this very Latin he does not,



or will not understand, as he speaks of coach-houses which no body can find in it, and takes stables for horses, &c. This is just what yo do, fir.

You translate from the Vulgate, fir; this is evident, and this is wrong; for when we criticise an author, it is not fair to form a judgment of him by a bad translation; now such is the Vulgate according to your own confession.

But even the Latin of the Vulgate, fir, you do not understand. We read there in the third book of Kings, chap. 4. verse 25. Et habebat Solomon quadraginta millia præsepia equorum currilium, & duodecim millia equestrium. This is not Cicero's or Livy's Latin; it is what you call somewhere, barbarous Latin; and yet it is not altogether unintelligible. We can plainly see in this passage, that Solomon had forty thousand stables for the horses of his chariots; but notwithstanding all our pains, we cannot find the same number of coach-houses. You added, fir, these forty thousand coach-houses; there appears not the least trace of them, either in the Latin or the Hebrew; to you only Solomon is indebted for them.

This is odd enough; but this is not all; you are not more successful in translating the remainder of the passage, & duodecim millia equestrium. These words signify, according to you, in your *Melanges*, twelve thousand stables, and according to you again, in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, twelve thousand horses. Is not this, fir, taking stables for horses, or horses for stables.

Now if we suppose with you, that these twelve thousand stables, in the *Melanges*, contained each ten horses, we shall have the sum of one hundred and twenty thousand saddle-horses, which added to four hundred thousand chariot-horses, will make up five hundred and twenty thousand war-horses; now this calculation (1) differs somewhat from that in the *Philosophical Dictionary*.

(1) *Differs somewhat.* This contradiction is slight; the difference is only one hundred and eight thousand.



Your liberality towards Solomon, sir, is amazing; you have just given him forty thousand coach-houses, which the scripture does not mention, and here you make him a present of twelve thousand stables for his twelve thousand saddle-horses; you suppose probably that each of Solomon's horses had a separate stable; such is the idea you form to yourself of the œconomy of this wise prince.

It is true, we must allow it, that this whole Latin text is not very clear; we might absolutely doubt whether by these words, *duodecim millia equestrium*, we should understand twelve thousand war-horses, or twelve thousand stables for them. We cannot even tell whether the author of the Vulgate by *præsepia* means stables, and it is not clear that this word, taken in this sense, is a just translation of the corresponding Hebrew word. Open (1) Bochart, sir, there you will find that the Hebrew expression may perhaps signify only the *place*, or as father Houbigant says, the *stall* of each horse.

Therefore the very obscurity of this passage should have given you some distrust of your objection; and in fact, what advantage can you gain by an obscure text so ill understood?

But still further; this passage of the third book of Kings, not only in the Latin, but also in the Hebrew, does not agree with the parallel passage in the Chronicles. It is said in this latter, that Solomon had not forty thousand stables for the horses of his chariots, as the book of Kings says, but forty thousand chariot horses in his stables, and also that he had twelve thousand saddle-horses in his stables, and not, as you make the book of Kings say, twelve thousand stables for his saddle-horses. Such a remarkable opposition between these two texts, added

(1) *Bochart.* Mr. Voltaire has been accused of sometimes pillaging the works of this learned man, without quoting his name; we believe that the charge is groundless. If the illustrious writer had taken the trouble of going up to this spring, he would have learned there what we have now said; and probably he would have been so kind as to inform his readers of it.  
*Edit.*



to the improbability of the calculation in the book of Kings, shews clearly, that there has been some alteration of the copiers in this, and perhaps even in both.

You say jestingly, that *they alone could be mistaken*; and you say the truth, especially in this case; for to what other cause but their negligence, hurry, or even if you will, their foolish vanity, which prompted them to exalt Solomon's character, could this enormous difference in calculation be ascribed between two writers, who seem to have been perfect masters of the subjects which they treated, and to have copied from authentick memorials? Agreeably to this, most of the best critics, Jews and Christians, reduce Solomon's saddle-horses to twelve thousand, and his chariot-horses to forty thousand, some even to four thousand.

Now we think, sir, it would be hard for you to shew that this prince could not possibly keep fifty two thousand horses. Besides Palestine, Solomon was master of part of Arabia Petræa, and of Arabia deserta, and you are sensible that in these regions horses are common and very good; that they are one of their staple commodities in trade; that cavalry formed anciently, and still forms a considerable body in the armies of those warlike nations. If horses were less common in Palestine, it is because the frequent use of them was forbidden (1) by religion and wise policy; but this country could feed horses, witness the cavalry and chariots of war of the Canaanites, which probably were not drawn by oxen; witness the traffick of horses which Solomon carried on, his cavalry, his chariots of war, and those of

(1) *By religion and wise policy.* The learned Bishop Sherlock has shewn that there was a motive of religion for this prohibition given to the Jews, of keeping a great number of horses. The legislator wanted to make the Hebrews, when they were in battle, place their confidence in the Lord, rather than in the multitude of their horses and chariots. *Hi in curribus & in equis, nos autem in nomine domini.* See his Treatise on Prophecy.

The political reason for this prohibition was, that in such a country as Palestine, too great a quantity of horses might have hurted population, one of the lawgiver's great objects. *Aut.*



his successors. If you think that Palestine feeds nothing but asses, and that there are now no other beasts of burthen in it, you are greatly mistaken again; modern travellers will tell you, that saddle-horses are not uncommon there. Perhaps then it may not be so impossible as you think for Solomon to have had fifty two thousand horses.

But if this number still appears too great for a Jewish Melk, nothing hinders you to reduce the number of horses (with the learned of whom we have been speaking) to sixteen thousand. You may chuse out of these calculations the one you like best; and if you think it proper, you need not adopt any of them. Neither your divines nor ours damn people for this. When the text is altered we are under no obligation to believe in it.

§ 3. *Of the riches which were brought to Solomon by the Ophir-fleet.*

TEXT. "His fleets brought him annually sixty-eight millions in pure gold, without reckoning silver and precious stones."

COMMENT. These sixty-eight millions also amaze you, sir. But besides that you are by no means certain that your valuations are just, what proofs have you that the trade of Ophir was not worth that sum to Solomon? Ophir was a country rich in gold; it was then with respect to Solomon, what the country of the Alileans has been since for some time, to the people who bordered (1) on Arabia, and what Peru has been since to the Spaniards. It is said in our scriptures that Solomon made gold as common in Jerusalem as stones. This oriental figure, which you will not certainly take literally, shews at least

(1) *On Arabia.* We read in the Bibliotheca Photiana an extract from a work of Agatharchides, where this writer relates, that the country of the Alileans abounded so much in pure gold, that they generally found pieces of it as large as the stones of olives or medlars, and even as nuts. That the inhabitants mixed them with transparent stones to make bracelets and necklaces of them; and that they sold it at so low a price, that they gave triple the weight in gold for brass, double for iron, and ten times the weight for silver. This is pretty nearly what passed afterwards at Peru. *Aut.*



that during this prince's reign, gold became very common in that capital; and this is a proof that the trade of Ophir was not so unprofitable as you think it.

If notwithstanding these considerations this sum seems rather exaggerated, if it is necessary to allow some mistake here, would it be agreeable to the laws of true criticism to ascribe it to learned and faithful writers, rather than to copiers, who are often absent and negligent? Our books have passed thro' so many hands and so many ages, that it cannot seem wonderful that some mistakes may be found in them. God certainly has not permitted that any material alterations should have crept in, any errors destructive of the purity of doctrine or morals; but it was not absolutely necessary that no inaccuracies of transcribers should be found in it upon objects foreign to religion and morality. And what matters it to either of these that David should have left more or less money to his son? That Solomon should have had more or fewer horses? More or fewer stables? &c. &c. Will the religion which is revealed in our scriptures be, for such reasons, less noble, and its morality less pure? Is it not extraordinary that a writer who passes over all the absurdities of the *Vedam* and the *Cormovedam*, on account of some fine precepts which have probably been copied out of our sacred writings, should raise such flimsy objections against these sacred writings, and trump up even the blunders of transcribers?

### THIRTEENTH EXTRACT.

*Of the Book of Wisdom. Of some mistakes of the learned critic, and of something more than mistakes.*

Altho' the Book of Wisdom, which your church inserts into the canon of inspired writings, is not received into our canon, yet our masters esteem it, and quote it with respect.



The author, whoever he was, seems to have lived among idolaters; and having been eye-witness of their superstitions and excesses, he did not hold the same opinion of idolatry that certain modern pretended philosophers do, who extol it, who regret the happy æra of it, and who would wish to bring it back for the good of the world. He goes up to the rise of this false worship; he shews the vanity and madness of it, and describes the cruelties, the impurities, and all the crimes of which it was, and is still the baneful source.

These considerations prompt us to stop for a moment, and to consider what you say of this book.

§ 1. *Of the Author of the Book of Wisdom.* This book is ascribed, according to the learned critic, to Philo of Biblos.

TEXT. "This book was not written by Solomon; it is generally ascribed to Jesus the son of Sirach." (Philos. Dict. article Solomon.)

COMMENT. *This book was not written by Solomon.* Who knows not this, sir? All the commentators observe it.

We cannot tell whether among Christians, it is generally ascribed to Jesus, son of Sirach; but this opinion is not common amongst us. Many of our learned, and even some of yours, ascribe it to another writer, who they think was an Hellenistick Jew, pretty well acquainted with the language and opinions of the Greeks; they believe him to have been one of those whom Ptolemy employed in translating our sacred writings; but they agree that there is nothing certain with respect to this author, his name, or the time in which he lived.

TEXT. "Others ascribe it to Philo of Biblos." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *To Philo of Biblos.* There have been several Philos, sir, known by their writings; three amongst the rest, the first and most ancient, whom Josephus mentions in the list of those Pagan authors,



who have spoke of the Jews; the second, more modern, a learned Jewish philosopher, who has left us some valuable works; the third, Philo of Biblos, another Pagan writer, of whom we have nothing but fragments.

It is certain that some criticks amongst you have held, that our philosopher of Alexandria was the author of the Book of Wisdom, and the solidity of their proofs is well known.

But this book could never be ascribed by you or any one else, except in a very absent moment, to the grammarian of Biblos. What relation could you possibly see, sir, between the Book of Wisdom, in which Paganism is combated, and Philo of Biblos, the Pagan translator of the Pagan Sanchoniatho?

§ 2. *An odd notion of the learned critick; he makes the Pentateuch posterior to the Book of Wisdom.*

Here is a still more extraordinary absence of mind, if it can truly be called so.

TEXT. "Whoever was the author of this book, it appears that in his time they had not yet the Pentateuch." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. What, sir, they had not the Pentateuch in the time of the author of the Book of Wisdom, whoever he be! They had it not in the time of Jesus, the son of Sirach, nor even in that of Philo the Jew, or of Philo of Biblos!

Jesus, son of Sirach, wrote about two hundred years after Esdras; Philo the Jew, in the first century of the christian æra, and Philo of Biblos, in the second. Therefore, if we believe you, they had not the Pentateuch two hundred years after Esdras; they had it not in the first, nor even in the second century of the christian æra! Does not your reasoning shew, that he who proves too much proves nothing? Certainly, sir, when you compiled this article, you had lost sight of all your dates.



§ 3. *Reasons alledged by the critic, to prove that the Pentateuch was posterior to the Book of Wisdom.*

But we are mistaken, sir, there is no absence of mind in this case; this is a reflected, premeditated assertion, which you endeavour to prove.

TEXT. "This author says in the 10th chapter, "that Abraham wanted to offer up his son Isaac at the time of the flood; and in another place, he speaks of the patriarch Joseph, as of a king of Egypt." (Ibidem, article Solomon.)

COMMENT. 1st. Even if the author had held this language, which you make him speak, would it follow from thence that, whoever he be, they had not the Pentateuch in his time? Can the blunders of one writer affect another, or prove for or against his priority?

Think of one of your best friends, the Abbe Nonotte, the man to whom you have (1) the highest obligations, if you love truth. He has (2) proved and demonstrated to you, that in an hundred places of your Universal History, you fall into gross blunders, and contradict preceding historians without reason. Can these mistakes prove that in your time there was no History of France?

2dly, But, sir, is it certain that the author of the Book of Wisdom has committed the two mistakes which you produce as proofs? The air of assurance with which you impute them to him may deceive some readers. We find it hard to conceive that

(1) *The highest obligations.* It seems to us however, that the illustrious writer has as many obligations to many others, we could name at least twenty. *Christ.*

(2) *Proved and demonstrated.* See the errors of Voltaire. A work necessary to all those who wish to read the Universal History, and not be the dupes of the mistakes and little arts of the illustrious writer. This work has already gone thro' three editions, notwithstanding the indecent resentment of Mr. Voltaire against it and its author. Will people never see, that the best answer that can be made to a fair piece of criticism, is to correct one's errors, and not to give abusive language? *Edit.*



a celebrated writer, who ought to reverence himself, even if he did not respect the publick, should forget himself so far as to alledge confidently such manifest falsehoods. But when we, read the text of the author we are convinced that this charge has not the least shadow of foundation.

Here follows first the passage which speaks of Abraham ; we shall produce it entire, and after the Vulgate version. “ Wisdom, says the author, preserved  
“ the first formed father of the world, that was cre-  
“ ated alone, and brought him out of his fall, and  
“ gave him power to rule all things ; but when the  
“ unrighteous went away from her in his anger,  
“ he perished also in the fury wherewith he murder-  
“ ed his brother ; for whose cause the earth being  
“ drowned with the flood, wisdom again preserved  
“ it, and directed the course of the righteous in a  
“ piece of wood of small value ; moreover the na-  
“ tions in their wicked conspiracy being con-  
“ founded, she found out the righteous and preserved  
“ him blameless unto God, and kept him strong  
“ against his tender compassion towards his son.”

What, sir ! is it in this text that you find that Abraham wanted to offer up his son at the time of the flood ? If the mistake was real, it would be extraordinary, and full as good as that of making Philo of Biblos the author of the Book of Wisdom. But in truth, is there one word in this passage which could raise such an idea, or give the least pretence for a charge of such a gross anachronism ? Is it not clear on the contrary, that the author places this sacrifice long after that dreadful catastrophe, when the nations, almost losing remembrance of God’s threatenings, gave themselves up to every kind of abomination ?

You add, sir, that in another place the author of the Book of Wisdom speaks of Joseph as of a king of Egypt. Let us see the passage. “ When the  
“ righteous was sold, wisdom forsook him not, but



“ delivered him from sin, she went down with him  
 “ into the pit ; and left him not in bonds till  
 “ she brought him the sceptre of the kingdom, and  
 “ power against those that oppressed him ; as for  
 “ them that oppressed him, she shewed them to be  
 “ liars and gave him perpetual glory.”

You ground your charge probably on these words, *the sceptre of the kingdom* ; but it is very plain that these words have not that absurd sense which you are pleased to give them. No one was ever mistaken here but yourself. Any one may see at first sight that it is unreasonable to take figurative expressions literally ; that nothing more is meant here than the power of a favourite minister, with whom his sovereign entrusts his confidence and authority ; that it would be ridiculous to ascribe to an author, who appears in other respects well informed, such gross errors upon such slight grounds ; such shocking ignorance as would disgrace not only Philo, or the son of Sirach, but the lowest of the Jews.

If in like manner we were to take literally some strong expressions, which you use in speaking of Cardinal Richelieu, and say that you made a king of France of him ; if we were to conclude farther from this, that you are little acquainted with the history of your country, or that your country had no annals before Lewis the fifteenth, would you think such arguments worthy of a place in a philosophical work ? And would you not think it a favour done to the reasoner, to suppose him only absent in mind ? No, such reasonings would not be mere mistakes, they would certainly be something worse than mistakes.

#### F O U R T E E N T H E X T R A C T.

*Miscellaneous observations. Mistakes and giddiness of the learned author on different subjects.*

When a man has a warm imagination, and writes hastily on subjects of which he is not master, it is very



difficult for him not to fall into mistakes. For this reason, fir, you have fallen into many, when you have undertaken to speak of our history, our sacred writings and our laws, &c.

We have already pointed out many of these mistakes; we shall now lay more of them before you, which will not appear less extraordinary. They are of such a nature, fir, that you will be obliged to confess, either that you are exceedingly giddy, or that you never read with care those divine writings which you criticise.

§ 1. *The Book of Joshua, and others placed in the Pentateuch.*

We do not misrepresent you, fir, these are your own words,

TEXT. “The Book of Moses, of Joshua, and the rest of the Pentateuch.” (Philos. of Hist. article Moses, page 189.)

COMMENT. It is evident, that besides the Book of Moses, you add here that of Joshua, and others to the Pentateuch. Where then was your attention, fir? You must have forgot even the derivation of the word Pentateuch. For if you had had the slightest recollection, you would have perceived that this collection contains no more than the five books of the lawgiver, and that neither the book of Joshua nor any other were ever comprehended in it. Will you not allow, fir, that altho’ the mistake is of no great consequence, yet he must have been very giddy who committed it? Here follow some more of the same stamp.

§ 2. *Cherubims of Solomon placed in the ark, and seen by the Romans.*

The title of this section may perhaps surprize you, as probably you do not think that you ever said any such thing, but we shall quote your own words faithfully, judge of this matter yourself.

TEXT. “Solomon got twelve oxen carved, upon which stood the molton sea; cherubims are



“ placed in the ark ; they have an eagle’s head, and  
 “ a calf’s head ; and it was probably this calf’s  
 “ head, coarsely made, and found in the temple  
 “ by the Roman soldiers, that was the cause of the  
 “ general persuasion that the Jews worshipped an  
 “ afs.” (Treaties of Toleration.)

COMMENT. Here are many anecdotes which would never have been known, if you had not been so good as to inform the publick.

*Cherubims are placed in the ark.* We knew, fir, that there were some *over* the ark, but never heard that there were any *in it*. The scripture does not say it, or rather it says quite the contrary. This is the great advantage of reading you ; one always learns something new.

You must premit us however to doubt that Solomon’s cherubims were placed in the ark ; we even think that it would have been impossible to put them in it. The ark was a chest two cubits high, and one and an half broad ; and the cherubims were ten cubits high and ten cubits broad, reckoning from the extremity of one wing to that of the other ; therefore they were not made to be put into the ark. This is another slight mistake of yours.

*It was probably this calf’s head, coarsely made and found in the temple by the Roman soldiers, that was the cause of the general persuasion, &c.* Neither the ark, fir, nor Solomon’s cherubims with coarse heads of calves had existed for a long time, when the Romans conquered Judea. They did not go into Solomon’s temple, which no longer existed, but into the second temple ; but they certainly did not see either the ark or the cherubims in this temple, for they never had been in it.

Apollonius, confuted by Josephus, speaks of this ridiculous opinion of the Pagans on the Jewish worship ; he throws back the rise of it to the time of Antiochus, who according to them, found an afs’s head of gold in the temple of Jerusalem ; other Pagan



authors ascribe it to causes still more ancient. There is therefore some probability, sir, that this opinion was prior to the invasion of the Romans, and that it did not owe its rise to the calves heads of Solomon's cherubims, which it is pretended that these conquerors found in the temple.

We cannot tell why in another place you change the calf's head of the cherubims into an ox's head; this change it is true is not very material. We understand however that a calf's head coarsely made, may be taken for an ass's head, whilst on the other hand it is hard to take an ass's head for that of an ox, even coarsely made; oxen have horns, and asses have none, nor calves neither.

In short, there were not cherubims in the ark, those of Solomon could not go into it; they were not seen by the Romans; the opinion that the Jews worshipped an ass's head, was prior to the invasion of these conquerors. All these assertions, which unfortunately for you are true, contradict yours plainly. Confess, sir, that in this absent hour you have committed many blunders.

§ 3. *Of the books, which according to the learned critick, are the only law of the Jews.*

We have just read over again your letter from a Quaker to a Bishop. This Quaker, who pretends to instruct a man from whom it would become him to receive instruction, makes rambling dissertations, quotes the English writers, produces the objections of some of them, and the answers of others, &c. he is a man of learning, but you allow him to commit some mistakes. For instance,

TEXT. "In the Decalogue, in Leviticus, in Deuteronomy, which are the sole law of the Jews."  
(Letter from a Quaker, &c.)

COMMENT. Surely this French Quaker is absent. What! do the books which he mentions make up the sole law of the Jews? Does he not know, or does he forget that Exodus contains, besides the Decalogue, the greatest part of our principal laws; that



the Book of Numbers contains also many of them ? With all his learning, fir, your Quaker is but a bad scholar, or a very giddy man.

What is extraordinary is, that speaking in your own name, you have made the same mistake, with respect to the same object. You say,

TEXT. " In Leviticus and Deuteronomy, that " is in the Jewish laws, there is no mention made, &c." (Philosophical Dictionary, article Angels.)

COMMENT. You see, fir, this is just what your Quaker had said ; you go even further than him ; for altho' he does not reckon the book of Numbers among those which contain our laws, yet he brings in part of Exodus, and you, fir, cut out the Book of Numbers and all Exodus. This is too much ! You have had the same absence of mind in your Treatise on Toleration, &c. &c.

How happens it, fir, that you speak so much of our laws, without knowing the books that contain them ?

§ 4. *The ceremony of taking off the brother-in-law's shoe. The shoe thrown at his head.*

We have already said that one of our laws ordered, that a widow left without issue might require marriage from her husband's brother. This custom, which was more ancient than Moses, as we may see by the example of Onan, and which still subsists in some places of India and Persia, was founded on reasonable and wise motives ; the object of it was to procure an establishment for the widow, to perpetuate the name of the deceased, to multiply families, and to prevent property from falling into the hands of strangers.

When the brother of the deceased refused the widow's suit, she had a right to bring him before a court ; there, in order to shew that he had forfeited his right of inheritance to the deceased, and that he deserved to walk like a slave barefooted, according to you,

TEXT. " She took off his shoe, and threw it at " his head,"



COMMENT. It is certain that when the brother's refusal was proved in court, which refusal was looked on as unjust towards the deceased and opprobrious to the widow, she was, in token of contempt, to take off his shoe ; but it is not said in any place, that *she was to throw it at his head.*

This little compliment you have invented. Probably you thought that it would make some of your readers laugh, and perhaps you had success. But what kind of readers are they !

§ 5. *Pretended contradictions between our laws.*

You add, that our laws contradict one another.

TEXT. " This law of Deuteronomy, which orders the brother in law to marry his brother's widow if he dies without issue, contradicts that law of Leviticus, which forbids a man to uncover the nakedness of his brother's wife, that is, to marry his sister in law." Leviticus, ch. 18. v. 15. (General History.)

COMMENT. This contradiction, which you think you see and which offends you, is not real. This verse of Leviticus is the general law ; that of Deuteronomy, of which we have been speaking, is an exception from it ; now an exception is not a contradiction. Mark this, fir, either you are absent or you equivocate.

After this short remark, it will be easy to answer an argument by which you endeavour to demonstrate, that Moses was not the author of Leviticus.

TEXT. " If Moses had wrote Leviticus, would he have contradicted himself in Deuteronomy ? Leviticus forbids marrying the brother's wife, and Deuteronomy commands it." (Philosophical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. To prohibit in certain cases, and to command in others, implies no contradiction ; otherwise every legislator would have contradicted himself.



This argument therefore is no demonstration. We find in it a small want of attention, if not of logick.

It is again on account of this pretended contradiction between Leviticus and Deuteronomy, that you make the following reflexion.

TEXT. "In these books (those of Leviticus and Deuteronomy) God seems, according to our weak comprehension, sometimes to command contraries, as a trial of a man's obedience." (Universal History.)

COMMENT. Weak capacities indeed are those which discover contradictions where there is not the shadow of them !

No, sir, it is only thro' the clouds of inattention and prejudice, that you see any thing here that can be so painful a trial of man's obedience.

You are a great master of irony but you must perceive that you do not always place it properly.

§ 6. *Whether among the Jews it was customary for a man to marry his sister.*

We have seen above that marriages between brothers and sisters of the same father, were expressly forbidden amongst us. We have quoted the Levitical law which forbade them ; it is clear ; and yet, sir, you assert that,

TEXT. "Among the Jews a man might marry his sister." (Philosophical Dictionary.)

COMMENT. What must we think of you, sir, when we see you asserting with so much confidence, a proposition so directly contrary to an express law ? We must suppose that you have the strongest proofs to support it ; let us see them.

TEXT. "When Amon, the son of David, ravishes his sister Tamar, David's daughter, she says to him, don't do any thing indecent to me ; for I could not bear the affront, and you would pass for a madman ; but demand me in marriage from



“ the king my father, and he will not refuse you.”  
(Ibidem.)

COMMENT. We shall say nothing of the burlesque air you give to an event which was the cause of so many disasters. There are various classes of readers, perhaps these parodies may suit the taste of some of them. But what astonishes us is, that you should coolly oppose the words of a young woman in confusion at the shocking affront which was going to be offered to her, to the precise terms of a clear law. Do these words, which dropped from her in her fright, suffice to prove that a custom which the law condemns, and of which the history of our nation gives no example, subsisted among the Jews? You add,

TEXT. “ This custom contradicts Leviticus a  
“ little, but contradictories are often reconciled.”

COMMENT. If this custom was proved, it would be not only a *little*, but absolutely contradictory to Leviticus. Now as it is certain, on the contrary, that it never subsisted amongst us, since the law prohibited it, where is the contradiction?

Observe, sir, how well your ironical reflection is placed!

§ 7. *Of Benadab, and of the two women of Samaria.*

We have just been reading, sir, an article of your Questions sur l'Encyclopedie, and it is certainly a very curious one. You return to the cannibals in it, and you assert again, altho' with some restrictions, that our fathers were cannibals, for as to us, you are so indulgent as to say that we are not so.

In order to prove your assertion, you once more produce the passage of Ezekiel quoted above; you insist again on these words, *Ye shall eat at my table*, and taking this metaphorical expression literally, you conclude from it, with an astonishing justness and strength of reasoning, that Ezekiel promised our fathers that they should eat the flesh of horse and man.



An author must have much courage to return ten times to the same subject. To make a sacred writer say, not once and en passant, but ten times over what he has not said, or rather the contrary of what he has said, is an invincible proof of candour, and of love for truth.

But, sir, altho' you have the front to repeat, do you think your readers have patience enough to read ten times over the same thing? Even if these were pleasing anecdotes, or important truths, it would be tolerable to hear them; but behold imputations grossly false, and interpretations as foreign from good sense as from the text! At last this will weary out the reader's patience.

However you do not confine yourself entirely within these bounds, for when you repeat a thing you generally add something new to it. You say,

TEXT. "It is very certain that the kings of Babylon had Scythians in their armies. These Scythians drank blood out of the skulls of their vanquished enemies, and eat their horses, and sometimes human flesh."

COMMENT. *The Scythians drank blood out of the skulls of their vanquished enemies, and eat their horses, and sometimes human flesh; therefore the Hebrews eat human flesh too; therefore Ezekiel promised them the flesh of man and horse. These truly are not mistakes, but invincible arguments!*

From these reasonings, you pass to the two women of Samaria, and you make a very curious reflexion on this shocking story.

TEXT. "Some criticks maintain that this fact could not happen, as is related in the 4th book of Kings, chap. 6. verse 26. and the following." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. *Some criticks.* What criticks, sir? By not naming them you give us room to think that you are the only critick in question.

However, let us see how you and your criticks



will shew that there is an error in the 4th book of Kings.

TEXT. " It is said in this book, that the king of Israel passing by or over the wall of Samaria, was thus applied to by a woman; Save me, O lord the king, and he replied, what wilt thou? And she answered, O king, here is a woman, who has said to me, give me your son, we will eat him to-day, and to-morrow we will eat mine, &c. These criticks say, that it is not probable that king Benadab, whilst he was besieging Samaria, should have passed quietly by or over the wall of Samaria, to determine disputes there between the Samaritans. It is still less probable that two women could not be satisfied with one child for two days; surely there was food enough in it for four days at least."

COMMENT. How deeply read in the scriptures your criticks are, sir! And how worthy of the confidence of their readers!

*These criticks say that it is not probable, &c.* No certainly it is not probable; it is utterly improbable. There cannot be any thing more absurd, than to suppose a king at war, besieging an enemy's city, and passing quietly by or over their wall, to determine disputes between the inhabitants.

But this absurdity, sir, is not in the fourth book of kings. The fourth Book of Kings expressly says, that it was to the king of Israel these two women applied. Must the Book of Kings be censured, because your criticks confound what that distinguishes, the king of Israel, with the king of Assyria, the besieged with the besieger?

With the same exactness and precision, these learned criticks add, that the child which was eaten by these two women ought to have been food enough for them for four days at least. They know surely what every one does not, the age and size of this child; and they have calculated exactly, how much two women can eat, who are almost starved to death. These indeed are noble discoveries.



Truly, sir, when we hear these able criticks thus reasoning, is it hard treatment to say, that they are absent in mind?

### F I F T E E N T H E X T R A C T.

*Of some sciences and arts. Of languages. Latin and Greek.*

When we read, sir, in one of your late compositions, that notwithstanding your infirmities, you are actually taken up with twenty sciences, altho' we could not help admiring your unremitting ardour for exalted knowledge, yet our admiration was mixed with pain.

We could not help pitying you, and besides pitying the sciences, the age you live in, and posterity. We pitied you, because you take too little care of your precious life and health, objects of great moment to all lovers of literature and philosophy. We pitied the sciences, because twenty sciences cultivated at one time by one man, altho' of a deep and bright genius, must be all lightly run over, and none of them searched to the bottom. And lastly we pitied posterity, because the mistakes of great men are of a spreading nature; they are equally hurtful to their cotemporaries and to future ages; and we think it very difficult for you not to fall into many such, when you treat of so many subjects. Already you have committed many mistakes. We shall endeavour now, sir, to point out some of them to you; but we do not promise to follow you every where thro' that immense career which you tread with such undaunted steps.

#### § 1. *Of Languages.*

You are a perfect master, sir, of all the learned languages and of the modern too. Those of the English, Italians, Romans, Greeks, Hebrews, Egyptians, Syrians, Caldeans, Arabians; from east to west, from antiquity to modern times, you know all their different tongues. You compare these diffe-



rent languages ; you determine their advantages and disadvantages ; you quote their expressions, and point out the sense of them ; in short, you possess a most extensive and unerring knowledge, with respect to all these objects as well as many others.

As for our knowledge, it is quite superficial and contracted ; we make this humble confession. We learned only a little Latin at (1) the university of Zamosc, and a few Greek words in that of Leyden ; and the acquaintance we have with the language of our fathers, is but just sufficient to enable us to understand moderately our sacred writings. And yet with this poor stock of learning, we venture to attempt to point out some mistakes of this kind in your writings, which ought to be corrected ! This is a bold and rash undertaking ; we are sensible of it ; but the desire of being useful to you, incites us to it. We hope that the mediocrity of our talents will be compensated by the ardour of our zeal.

§ 2. *Of the Latin tongue. Some of the learned critick's Latin.*

You have, sir, a translation of our sacred writings in the Latin tongue, which some of the learned call barbarous, and (2) others vindicate it. In imitation probably of this old translation, you speak to the sea in Latin, and you say to it,

TEXT. "Huc usque venies & non ibis amplius."

COMMENT. *Non ibis amplius.* If you pretend that this Latin is out of the Vulgate, you wrong it. Altho' the Vulgate is barbarous, as you say, yet it never pushed barbarism to that pitch. We have read it over carefully and found no such thing in it. Pray then, sir, is this your Latin ? It is rather flat.

3. N

(1) *University of Zamosc.* This is an university in Poland, frequented by the Jews. Quære, Are they admitted at Leyden ? *Christ.*

(2) *Others vindicate.* See what Filesc, the famous Syndic of the university of Paris has said of it. See also what a learned Benedictine has said in a work called, An Explanation of some difficult passages of scripture. *Idem.*



Ah, fir, *non ibis amplius* ! This is the sort of Latin we hear, when we are taking post-horses in Poland.

§ 3. *A passage of the Vulgate ill translated.*

After all, what matters it whether a man speaks elegant Latin or not ? The point is to understand it. We doubt not, fir, but you have a perfect knowledge of the authors of the Augustin age ; but indeed you sometimes make mistakes, when you translate Latin writers of later date. For instance, your Vulgate version addressees these words to God, “*pro-*  
“*ducens scenum jumentis & herbam servituti homi-*  
“*num.*” Which you thus render,

TEXT. “*Thou producest hay for cattle, and*  
“*grafs for man.*” (Philos. of History.)

COMMENT. We think, fir, that this is not the exact sense of the Latin. This verse does not speak of the food of men, but of that of beasts intended for the service of men ; for beasts God gives hay and grafs. In this passage, fir, grafs and hay are (1) synonymous words. Observe this. And men do not eat hay.

If you found the Latin of the Vulgate obscure, why had you not recourse to the Hebrew text ? Truly this is an unpardonable negligence in a man that understands Hebrew ; and you often fall into it !

§ 4. *A mistake of greater consequence.*

The two mistakes which we have now pointed out are but of small consequence ; the following one is important.

You are speaking of your first masters, those who first brought to light your great talents. You tell us of the following inscription. *Quod eorum instinctu piacularis adolescens facinus instituerat* ; and thus you render these words, “*they were driven away.*”

TEXT. “*Because they prevailed on a young man*  
“*to commit this parricide by way of penance.*” (E-  
vangile du jour.)

(1) *Synonymous words.* For this reason saint Jerom, who understood Hebrew, thus translates it. *Germinans herbam jumentis & fanum servituti hominum.* Edit.



COMMENT. We cannot find any thing in this Latin sentence that speaks of penance. Perhaps you think that *piacularis adolescens* signified a young penitent; no, sir, it signifies an accursed young man, an execrable young villain; therefore this expression, *by way of penance*, is either a wilful mistake, or at least a gross blunder.

You add a reflection, the justness and bent of which, Christians are better judges of than we can be.

TEXT. " This word, (that of penance,) becomes  
" by this act, one of the most extraordinary monu-  
" ments for illustrating the history of the human  
" mind."

COMMENT. Yes, truly, if this word was to be found in the inscription. But if it is not there, if you have added it out of your own head, if this mistake is purposely made to cast an odium on the rites of your church, and the guides of your youth, what will this monument serve to illustrate in the history of the human mind?

Rousseau generously refused to write against these fathers, because they were in trouble; and you, their disciple, seize this unfortunate opportunity of once more opening and poisoning those sores which time had closed up. With this view you falsify, or at least unfaithfully translate a publick inscription! This is not a very honourable proceeding, sir; some gratitude is owing to our first masters; but above all things there should be no misrepresentations.

Upon the whole, these three little mistakes with regard to the Latin tongue, are of no great consequence to the Jews. Consider however, sir, whether it is proper that they should stand in your new edition.

§ 5. *Of the Greek tongue. Of some mistakes in this language which must certainly be owing to the printer.*

You display your erudition chiefly, sir, when the Greek language is in question; this language has for you charms inexpressible; you never speak of it



but with raptures; you every where extol its clearness, copiousness and harmony. After all this, how can we suppose, with certain rash Christians, that you do not understand Greek, or that you have at most but a smattering of it? Far be it from us to form such bold conjectures! We think it incumbent on us, to look upon all these small mistakes into which you have fallen, merely as typographical errors, or at most as absences of mind, very excusable in a great man who is dipt in twenty sciences. You have said, for instance,

TEXT. "They gave these magistrates the name of *Basiloi*, which answers to that of prince." (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. You have been teized, sir, with respect to this word (1) *Basiloi*; you have been told that it should be written *Basileis* and not *Basiloi*, for *Basiloi* is not Greek. As if Mr. Voltaire could be ignorant of what children know! You have given a very good answer, that this is (2) a typographical error.

People have replied, that it is hard to conceive how, by a typographical error, the same word should be repeated five or six times in your works, and in every edition of them, still in the same way, that is always wrong, and never right. But all this is mere chicanery! Altho' it is hard to conceive this, yet there is no physical impossibility in it. As for our parts, sir, we are not so hard to satisfy; the defence seems to us exceedingly plausible. Therefore altho' you have said,

TEXT. "Symbole comes from *Symbolein*, idol comes from the Greek *eidos* a figure, *Eidolos*, the representation of a figure. The Greeks had their

(1) *Basiloi*. See the Supplement to the Philosophy of History, a work full of uncommon erudition, which Mr. Voltaire says he has confuted *politely and learnedly*. Alas, what politeness and learning! *Aut.*

(2) A typographical error. Indeed as Mr. Voltaire very justly observes, the matter is only a sigma forgotten, and an *oi* put for an *ei*. *Aut.*



*Demonoi* . . . . The Demonos of the Greeks, &c.”  
(Philosoph. Dict.)

COMMENT. We do not think, sir, that we have any right to find fault with you about this ; it would ill become us truly to tell you that you should have wrote *Eidolon* and not *Eidolos*, for *Eidolos* is not Greek. That the Greeks have no *Demonoi* but *Demonēs* ; that *Demonos* for *Demoon* is a solecism ; that *Symbolein* for *Symballein* is a barbarism. You know all these things better than we do, and it is about a thousand to one that you wrote the words correctly.

Certainly, however, it is unfortunate that these little mistakes should be found in every edition of your works, even in that which is executing under your own eyes. But these printers are such idle rogues ; such things will not surprize any one that knows them ! Probably these very people made you say,

TEXT. “ Certainly the word Knath, which signifies the Phenicians, is not so harmonious as that of Hellenos or Graios.” (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. You have been told that the word *graios* is not Greek, and that you have blundered in naming that nation whose character you so highly extol.

You have been told that you ought to have wrote *Hellen* and not *Hellenos* ; that *Hellenos* is not a nominative case nor *Graios*, &c. You certainly knew this well, but your printers are not so learned ; you probably had wrote *Hellen* and *Graicōs*, and they wrote *Hellenos* or *Graios*. O the wretched printer ! the poor compositor ! the ignorant corrector of the press ! What a man must suffer who deals with such people !

§ 6. *Of some other slight faults, which might not perhaps be the printer's.*

And yet it is hard, sir, to charge on your printers all those little mistakes relative to the Greek language, which we meet with here and there in



your works. There are some which cannot justly be charged on them ; for instance you say,

TEXT. “ A raven, (if we believe Suetonius) “ cried out in the capitol, when they were going “ to assassinate Domitian, This is well done, all is “ well.”

COMMENT. It, sir, did not signify all is well, but all will be well, all will succeed. The Romans were not of your opinion, that future events cannot be foretold ; they thought that even ravens sometimes foretold them ; *prædixit ab ilice cornix*.

Probably this change of the future for the present tense, proceeds rather from your antipathy for predictions, than from your correctors of the press. But, sir, a translator is bound to consult rather his text than his taste. Estai is the future not the present tense. Here follows something yet stronger, you say,

TEXT. “ John Castriot was the son of a despot, “ that is of a vassal prince ; for this is the meaning “ of the word despot ; and it is very extraordinary “ that the name of despotick has been particularly “ given to great sovereigns who acquired absolute “ power.” (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. Here, sir, criticks have triumphed. You know it, and indeed this assertion that despot signifies a vassal-prince, this amazement that the name of despotick should have been given particularly to great sovereigns who acquired absolute power, &c. all this can scarcely be a typographical error. But we think that the more palpable the blunder, the more excusable it is ; the poorest scholar knows that despot signifies not a vassal prince but a master, and absolute master who commands his slaves. We perceive then immediately that you must have wrote this in an absent hour ; and who is not sometimes absent ? We can easily perceive that you are pretty often so.

From these small mistakes in the Greek tongue, shall we infer with some Christians, that you are a



bad Grecian? This inference would be uncivil; God forbid that we should push *detestation* so far! We shall only draw two conclusions from this, the first is, that when you translate Greek you should do it with more attention; the second is, that when Greek is printing, you should have a more watchful eye over your printers.

It is true these precautions are not necessary to persuade your admirers, that you are a master of Greek; these kind people will believe you on your word, and will take, as long as you please, some unintelligible mangled words for pure Greek, which they do not understand.

But surely you will not rest satisfied merely with the applause and approbation of such readers. Your own nation and foreigners have some learned men among them, whose suffrages are worth looking after. You have reason to fear, lest these great encomiums of the Greek language may appear to them to be an empty parade of learning; your quotations, quackery; and these frequent mistakes, proofs too convincing of your small share of knowledge in this branch of literature.

As for us, sir, we have pointed out these mistakes, only that you might correct them in your new edition, if you think proper; even were they to stand, we should look upon them merely as spots, light spots, which can cause neither astonishment nor offence. *Non ego paucis offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit, aut humana parum cavit natura.* Nature is so weak and a man has so much business in this world!

#### S I X T E E N T H   E X T R A C T.

*Of certain sciences and arts; the sequel. Of the Hebrew language.*

He who attempts to criticise any work, should previously understand the language in which it is written.



You are sensible of this, sir ; and for this reason you have consecrated, they say, a great portion of your time and labour to the study of the Hebrew tongue. Success has crowned your labours, we are convinced of it, as becomes us.

But we fear lest others may entertain some doubts on this head, if you do not change in your new edition certain arguments which are in the preceding ones. We shall quote some of them.

§ 1. *Poverty and difficulty of the Hebrew tongue. Proofs which the learned critick gives of this. Observations on these proofs.*

One of the first advantages you have reaped from your application to the Hebrew language is, your finding out that it is poor and almost unintelligible. This you endeavour to prove.

TEXT. “ This language, like all barbarous idioms, was poor ; the same word served for several ideas.”

COMMENT. We do not pretend to say that the same words serving for several ideas, is a proof of the copiousness of a language, but is it on the contrary a proof of its poverty and barbarism ?

This defect, sir, is not peculiar to barbarous idioms ; it may be found in the most copious and polite languages ; in that of Greece and Rome, and in yours too ; languages which cannot be called barbarous.

Probably then your first argument, on the poverty and barbarism of the Hebrew tongue, is no demonstration. You add,

TEXT. “ The Jews, deprived of the arts, could not express what they were ignorant of.” (Toleration.)

COMMENT. The Jews spoke the same language as the Phenicians ; and these latter were acquainted with the arts, for they taught them to the Greeks and to others. Could one justly say that the people of Lucca, who speak Italian, have a poor language,



and that the Florentines, who also speak Italian, have a rich and copious language?

But you will perhaps say, that our assertion is not well grounded, that the Jews spoke the language of the Phenicians. But, sir, we assert this after some of the illustrious learned, even after yourself; for according to you,

TEXT. "The Jews for a long time spoke no other language in Canaan than that of the Phenicians."

COMMENT. Nothing is more certain. The Jews spoke the Phenician language for a long time; and it would be hard to point out a period in which they did not speak it, from the time of Jacob to the Babylonian captivity. Perhaps you will say that the Phenician language was poor, but according to you again,

TEXT. "The most perfect languages must necessarily be the languages of those nations who have most cultivated the arts and sciences. (Premiers Melanges.)"

COMMENT. This is very true; now the Phenicians cultivated the arts and sciences. Therefore you add,

TEXT. "The language of the Phenicians was the language of an industrious, commercial, rich nation, spread over the whole earth." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Therefore, sir, their language must have been, according to your principles, one of the most perfect and rich languages; and you assert that the language of the Hebrews, who used the same, was one of the poorest languages. Truly, sir, it is very difficult to reconcile these assertions. But,

TEXT. "The words geometry, astronomy, were always absolutely unknown among the Jews." (Philos. Dict.)

COMMENT. Ist, The Babylonians were astronomers, the Egyptians geometricians, and the Phenicians both. Be so kind, sir, as to tell us what were the names of astronomy or geometry at Baby-



lon or in Egypt. Inform us at least, how the Phenicians called these sciences.

2dly, Do you not perceive, that your argument implies, that every word of the Hebrew language must be found in those books which the ancient Hebrews have left us? Truly a very reasonable supposition!

What! sir, it is probable, or rather certain that all terms, and all the sciences of the Greeks and Latins have not come down to us, altho' we have such a number of books of both; and you expect that all the words of the Hebrew language, all the sciences of the Hebrews, should be found in a single volume, which has escaped the fate of so many others, a mere pocket-volume!

3dly, Do you know, sir, the signification of the word *thekounah*? You will answer perhaps that this word is not in the Bible; we know it; but altho' the derivative is not to be found there, yet the root is.

TEXT. "How could the Hebrews have sea-terms, they, who before Solomon, had not a boat?" (Premiers Melanges.)

COMMENT. How can the people of Geneva, who are not masters of an advice boat, properly fitted out, have, in their language, terms of sea-war? Because the people of Geneva speak French, and the French have a fleet properly equipped, and all the terms of sea-war in their language.

Thus the Hebrews may have had sea-terms, without having a boat, because they spoke the language of the Phenicians, who had fleets.

However, sir, when you affirm, that before Solomon the Hebrews had not a boat, you forget Deborah's song, which represents Aser at ease in his havens, and Dan busied with his ships.

TEXT. "How could they have any philosophical terms, they who were plunged in such profound ignorance, until they began to learn something in their captivity?" (Ibidem.)



COMMENT. How could they have any philosophical terms? The same way that the Phenicians got them.

*They who were plunged in such profound ignorance, &c.* Here, sir, you exaggerate very much. Not to mention the author of the Pentateuch; Jeremiah, Isaiah, and other prophets, Solomon who wrote so much, David the author of so many tender and sublime pieces of poetry, &c. lived before the captivity, and they were not men plunged in the most profound ignorance. It could be proved, that many who are very justly esteemed in our days as writers of merit, fall short of those ancient Hebrews, not only in sublimity of thought, justness, and variety of images, but even in the energy, fire, and copiousness of expression.

*Plunged in such profound ignorance.* This is a passionate expression, sir; anger is over-coming you. Let us shift the subject.

§ 2. *Of the obscurity of the Hebrew language. Whether it is such, that our sacred writings are absolutely unintelligible?*

You pass from this to the difficulty, or rather impossibility of understanding our language.

TEXT. "This language labours under difficulties insurmountable; it is a mixture of Phenician and Syrian, &c. and this ancient mixture is at this day much adulterated. The Hebrews never had but two moods for the verbs, the present and the future, the other moods are guess-work. Each adverb has twenty different significations. The same word is taken in contrary senses." (Toleration.)

COMMENT. Let us proceed to examine. *This language has difficulties insurmountable.* But what ancient language has not its difficulties? Is there an ancient writer, even a Latin one, who has not some difficulties insurmountable? And yet the greatest part of these writings is understood. The same may be said of our writings; altho' obscure in many



places, yet they are in general clear enough to convey certain knowledge, with regard to every thing that ought to be known respecting doctrine and morals.

*It is a mixture of Phenician and Syrian.* The Hebrew was less a mixture of Phenician and Syrian, even than the language of the Phenicians; it was also fundamentally the language of the Syrians, Caldeans, Arabians, &c. All these idioms were really so many dialects of a general language, which was common to all these nations, which may be called the oriental language. Thus (1) the truly learned speak; and if you had observed this, you would not have fallen into so many little mistakes and weak arguments.

*And this ancient mixture is at this day much adulterated.* We do not pretend to say that the Hebrew tongue has been preserved without any adulteration; this could scarcely be affirmed of the Greek or Latin.

*Every adverb has twenty different significations.* Open the first Greek Lexicon, sir, and you will find that most of the Greek prepositions have twenty different significations; and that the same word is very often taken in contrary senses.

*The Hebrew has but two moods, the present and the future.* The famous Grammarian Dumarfais would have said *two tenses*. The present and the future are tenses, *not moods*. We must forgive this little grammatical slip in a great man who is taken up with twenty sciences.

It is true the Hebrew has but two tenses, and the others are guess-work, but it is generally very easy to guess at them.

Upon the whole, we readily grant that our language would have been more clear, if it had had all the tenses of the Greek and French language;

(1) *The truly learned.* See among others the works of the learned Michaelis; Louth, de sacra poesi Hebræorum, &c.



and we do not deny that the want of these is the cause of some obscurity in our sacred writings.

§ 3. *For what reasons chiefly the Hebrew language appears poor and obscure.*

But what principally contributes to make this language appear poor and obscure is, that we have at present but one book, of no considerable bulk, in it. What language would not appear in the same light, if we had as few remains of it? How would even the Greek tongue appear, if out of all the Greek books, none had come down to us but Herodotus, Eschilus and Pinder?

This, sir, is the true reason of the difficulty and actual poverty of the Hebrew. Hence a multitude of words relative to the arts and sciences are absolutely unknown to us at present, altho' they formerly made up part of this language. For instance, how many words, of which we have not any idea now, would have been found in the works of Solomon, on botany and natural history, if these works had been preserved! Hence too it happens that we have not the same advantage in Hebrew as in other languages, of comparing a number of texts with one another, in order to clear up the meaning of words. Therefore, in speaking of the poverty of the Hebrew tongue, you ought to have insisted principally on this reason; and this is precisely the one which you do not mention.

Altho' this disadvantage is the necessary cause of obscurity in various passages of our sacred writings, yet it prevents us not from understanding very clearly the largest and most useful part of them. And what remains of our writers, is sufficient to convince an impartial man of letters, that their language, so far from being poor and dry, as you say, was on the contrary copious and rich. Let a man read Jeremiah and Isaiiah, and tell us whether they are deficient in purity, elegance, sublimity, and pomp of expression. Does David want these in his Psalms, or Moses in his Canticles? Does the author of



the Book of Job, our Homer, the most ancient and perfect of our poets, want them? You are a poor Hebrean indeed, sir, if in their divine writings you have found the Hebrew language dry and poor!

We shall now, with your leave, proceed from your general reflections on our language, to some particulars.

§ 4. *Of the word Israel. Whether Jacob could not get the name of Israel, and the Hebrews that of Israelites, 'till after or during the Babylonish captivity. The critick's forgetfulness and contradictions.*

TEXT. "Philo says that *Israel* is a Caldean word, that it is a name which the Caldeans gave to just men consecrated to God; that *Israel* signifies *seeing God*. This therefore is sufficient proof, that the Jews did not call Jacob *Israel* and themselves *Israelites*, until they had got some knowledge of the Caldean tongue; now they could not get any knowledge of it until they became slaves in Caldea. Is it probable that in the deserts of Arabia Petraea they had already learned the Caldean tongue?" (Philosophy of History.)

COMMENT. We grant, sir, that Philo says *Israel* is a Caldean word, and that the Jews did not learn the Caldean language in the deserts of Arabia.

From this you infer, that they could not get any knowledge of this language, until they became slaves in Caldea. We beg leave to say, sir, that this is far from a just inference.

In the first place your memory is faulty. You do not recollect that Abraham was a Caldean, that his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot and all their family were of Caldea; that Rebecca the wife of Isaac, was of the family of Nachor, the brother of Abraham, and a Caldean too; that Jacob threw himself into the arms of this Caldean family, to avoid the resentment of his brother; that he married two



wives there and had many children; and that a little time after he had quitted this family, he received the name of *Israel* from the angel. This patriarch who descended from the Caldeans, who had lived so long in a Caldean family, and his children who were born there, might have had some knowledge of the Caldean language.

We may add, as we observed above, that according to many of the learned, the languages which were then spoke in Caldea, Syria, and Palestine, &c. were only so many dialects of one language, and that according to yourself, the Hebrew was a jargon of mixed Caldean; therefore the Hebrews might have the use and knowledge of a Caldean word, without becoming slaves to the Caldeans.

Let us add lastly, that Philo the Hellenistick Jew, who was probably much better acquainted with Greek than with Caldean, is mistaken with regard to the origin and signification of (1) the word *Israel*; this name, which was given to Jacob after his wrestle with the angel, is very pure Hebrew, compounded of two very pure Hebrew roots, which signify to prevail, to wrestle with advantage (2) against God, as is explained in Genesis.

To the authority of Philo, you add that of Josephus. You say,

TEXT. "Israel signifies *seeing God*, as Philo informs us in his Treatise of Rewards and Punishments, and as the historian Josephus says in his answer to Appion." (Homlie sur l'Atheisme, Dictionaire Philos.)

COMMENT. When we read over this passage, and three or four more, in which you repeat nearly the

(1) *The word Israel.* This word might absolutely signify in the Caldean and Hebrew language, *seeing God*; but another signification not less conformable to the Hebrew roots, caused this name to be given to Jacob. See Genesis, chap. 32. v. 28. Edit.

(2) *Against God.* That is, against the angel of God, the angels are sometimes called God's Elohim in Scripture. The angel says to Jacob according to the Hebrew text, thou hast fought against the Elohim, (against the Gods, that is the angels,) and against men; and thou hast remained conqueror. Aut.



same things, we asked ourselves, did Josephus say this, or did Mr. Voltaire make a false quotation?

In the midst of doubt we read over several times his answer to Appion, without finding any thing in it, similar to what you make him say.

Tired of fruitless searches we read over his antiquities, and we found in them precisely the contrary of what you ascribe to him. It is said there (1) expressly that after the wrestle, the angel ordered Jacob to assume the name of *Israel*, which signifies in Hebrew, *wrestling against the angel of God and resisting him*. Such credit, sir, must be given to your quotations, even when repeated in three or four places.

Come again and tell us, that Israel is a Caldean name, that Josephus affirms it, and in your ironical style, that probably the Israelites did not learn the Caldean language in the deserts of Arabia Petræa. This irony we think, sir, is no proof of the goodness of your memory, or of the extent of your knowledge in the Hebrew and Caldaick tongues.

§ 5. *Of the names of God in use amongst the Jews. Mistakes and contradictions of the illustrious writer on this subject. Of the word El.*

Nor do you give better proofs of your knowledge by the manner in which you speak of the names of God, used by our fathers. You say,

TEXT. "These puppies of Jews are of so late a date, that they had not a word in their language even to signify God." (Philos. Dict. Raison par alphabet, Dialogues.)

COMMENT. *These puppies*. This is not a decent expression, sir, and you use it often. When you bestow it on worthy members of literature it gives offence; but when you apply it to a whole nation, it only excites laughter.

*Are of so late a date*. The Jews never pretended that they were the most ancient people in the world, such a pretension would contradict all their annals.

(1) *Expressly*. See his Antiquities, lib. 1. ch. 20. *Aut.*



*They had not a word in their language, &c.* In the first place, sir, permit us to ask you what was the first Jewish language? For in short these puppies did not arise out of the earth; they were born among some nations more ancient than themselves; consequently they had a language. Pray, sir, what was this ancient language, in which they had not a name for God?

*Even to signify God.* This is new if not whimsical. What! sir, when Abraham and his family quitted their native country by God's command, when they removed into a strange land for the sake of freely worshipping the true God, Abraham and his family had not a word in their language to signify God! Can you be serious when you say this?

Abraham a Caldean, and his family Caldeans also, probably spoke Caldean. Now the Caldeans at least must have had a word in their language to signify God, witness, according to you, *Israel, seeing God, Babel, city of God, El*, the name of God. For,

TEXT. "This name (El) was originally Caldean."

COMMENT. And can we conceive that the father of the faithful, who was a Caldean, did not know the name of God in Caldean? Do you perceive, sir, how sensible, judicious and conclusive all this is? Here follows something not less so;

TEXT. "This word El, signified God among the first Phenicians. (Philos. of Hist. article Phenicians.) The Jews took from the Phenicians all the names which they gave to God." (Ibidem.)

COMMENT. Therefore Abraham, a Caldean, with his Caldean family, came into Phenicia, to borrow a Caldean word. These fine things are coolly related to us in the *Melanges de Philosophie*, in the *Raison par Alphabet*, which might better be called (1) *Abfurdity par Alphabet*!

3 P

(1) *Abfurdity par Alphabet.* This jest is not to our taste; we think that our authors indulged themselves in it, only because it was copied from some of Mr. Voltaire's wit. *Edit.*



§ 6. *Sequel of the same subject. Of the word Jaho, or Jehovah.*

The Jews never pronounced the word *Jehovah* but with the profoundest respect ; it is to them the holy and dreadful name. Christians who worship the same God, ought never to pronounce this word irreverently. Let us see, sir, whether you speak of it with truth at least.

TEXT. “ The Jews were obliged to borrow the “ name of *Jehovah* or *Jaho* from the Syrians.” (Raïson par Alphabet, Dialogues.)

COMMENT. This, sir, ought to be proved ; until then we may doubt of it, and we may the more justly do so, because you say in another place,

TEXT. “ They borrowed this word from the “ Phenicians, (the word *Jehovah*.”) (Philos. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. This assertion somewhat contradicts the former, and you give no better proof it ; this is depending much on the kindness or credulity of your readers.

You should have informed them at least, from which of these two nations, the Jews first borrowed this word ; and why, after borrowing it from one, they borrowed it after from the other. We doubt not but you could say many very curious things on this subject. But this is not all, you add,

TEXT. “ They borrowed this word from the “ Egyptians, as the truly learned believe.”

COMMENT. They therefore borrowed it from the Syrians, Egyptians and Phenicians ; three loans instead of one. Indeed, sir, you say too much to be believed. With all these reasons you would almost persuade us, that this word is of Hebrew extraction.

*They borrowed this word from the Egyptians, as the truly learned believe. The truly learned, sir ! You cannot be of the number, for you say that the Jews borrowed this word (1) from the Phenicians only. And*

(1) *From the Phenicians only. See Philosophical Dictionary. Aut.*



yet you are of this number; for you say also that *they borrowed it from the Egyptians*. This shews the advantage of contradicting one's self.

We do not pretend however to deny that the word Jehovah was known by the Egyptians; they certainly knew it after the prodigies which they saw performed in the name of Jehovah. But did they know it before? You give no proofs of this, and we think that a contrary conclusion may be drawn from the words of Pharaoh, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not Jehovah and I will not let Israel go."

TEXT. "The word Jaho was so common in Egypt, that Diodorus Siculus uses it." (Philos. of History.)

COMMENT. Diodorus Siculus may have used it, altho' it was not common in the East, and it may have been common in the East in the time of Diodorus, without having been so in the time of the ancient Hebrews. There is an interval of more than one thousand five hundred years between Moses and Diodorus Siculus; it is proper not to lose sight of these periods.

In short, sir, if the word Jaho was common in the east from the earliest times, as were those, according to yourself, (1) *El, Eloha, Elobim, Adonai, Baal, Bel*, this is an additional proof of what we have already advanced, that in these early ages especially, the languages of the east had a close resemblance, and that they were no more than dialects of the same language; so that a great many words were common to them all, and he that understood one language easily understood the others; just as he who understands Spanish, can easily understand Italian, and he that understood the Greek of Athens, might easily understand the Greek of Ionia.

(1) *The words El.* Mr. Voltaire observes that the word *El* has a close relation to the Arabian word *Alla*, the observation is just, and this is another proof of the original resemblance of all these ancient dialects of the oriental language. *Aut.*



§ 7. *Of the names of Angels.*

You strive hard, sir, to persuade your readers, that the Hebrews knew nothing of angels 'till after the Babylonish captivity. Various reflexions scattered in your *Raison par Alphabet* and your *Philosophie de l'Histoire* tend to establish this point. You say,

TEXT. "In the laws of the Jews, that is in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, there is not the least mention made of angels; but in the histories of the Jews there is much talk of them." (*Philos. Dict. article Angels.*)

COMMENT. Altho' no mention is made of angels in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, yet they are spoken of in Exodus, a book which contains a great part of our laws, as Leviticus and Deuteronomy contain part of our history; it becomes a learned Hebrean, such as you are, to be a little better acquainted with our books and their contents. You add, at least,

TEXT. "It is well known that the Jewish clan borrowed the names which the Caldeans gave to angels, when the Jewish nation was captive in Babylon." (*Ibidem.*)

COMMENT. *It is well known.* This is the assertion, now let us see the proof.

TEXT. "These words Raphael, Gabriel, &c. are Caldean. The Jews did not know them 'till the captivity; for before the history of Tobias we cannot find the name of any angel, either in the Pentateuch or in any Hebrew book." (*Philos. of Hist. article Angels.*)

"Sathan is found in Job, but who is so little versed in antiquity as not to know that the word Sathan is Caldean?" (*Ibidem.*)

COMMENT. *These words Raphael, &c. are Caldean.* We might stop you here, sir, and maintain that these words are as much Hebrew as Caldean, and that as they are derived from the same language, which is the common parent of the Hebrew and Cal-



dean dialects, they belong no more to one of these dialects than to the other.

But even suppose these words were rather Caldean than Hebrew, would it follow from thence that the Jews could not know them until the Babylonish captivity? We have already shewn the contrary.

*Before the history of Tobias, we cannot find the name of any angel, either in the Pentateuch, &c.* Therefore these words are not Hebrew, therefore the Hebrews did not know them until the captivity. You always suppose, sir, that all the words of the Hebrew tongue must be found in the books prior to the captivity, and that the Hebrews knew no more but what is found in them.

The same may be said of the word Sathan; it is as much an Hebrew as a Caldean word, at least if you will believe a man (1) somewhat versed in antiquity; and altho' this word were Caldaick, your conclusion would not necessarily follow, that the author of the Book of Job was an Arabian. But let us now lay aside the book of Job; we may perhaps hereafter have occasion to say something to you concerning it.

§. 8. *Of some other Hebrew and Phenician words, &c.*

You have ventured, sir, to translate some Hebrew and Phenician words; and you have not always done it with such exactness as might be expected from a man of your knowledge in the oriental languages.

TEXT. “*Kiriath Sepher* signifies the country of Archives, *Muth* or *Moth*, matter; *Colpi Jaho*, the spirit of God, the wind of God, or rather the mouth of God, &c. (Philos. of History.)

COMMENT. *Kiriath Sepher* does not signify the country of Archives, but the city of Books. Out of a city you form a country. This is allowing too great measure. *Muth* or *Moth*, sir, does not signify

(1) *Somewhat versed in antiquity.* The learned Mr. Michaelis. See his Notes on the celebrated bishop Louth's *Treatise de sacrâ Poesi Hebræorum.* Aut.



matter but death; it is *Mor* that signifies matter. Such a difference do the letters *t* or *th* make in words.

*Colpi Jabo, the spirit, the wind, or rather the mouth of God.* You hesitate, sir, you are doubtful of the signification, and in the midst of your confusion you determine ill. *Col*, is the voice, *Pi*, the mouth, *Jabo*, God, *Colpi Jabo*, the word of the mouth of God. See Bochart.

(1) Some learned christians have already pointed out these little mistakes, they have concluded, one of them, that you should not decide with such authority with respect to the oriental languages; another, that you have a very superficial knowledge of them; another still . . . . But why should we be repeating to you criticisms which have greatly incensed you? Let us be satisfied with praying you to correct these small inadvertencies, from which we are sorry to see that such disagreeable consequences have been drawn. Our poor endeavours have this only for their object.

Sir, when a man attempts to make a general revolution in the minds of men, he should have, if *not the gift of tongues*, yet a decent knowledge of them.

#### SEVENTEENTH EXTRACT.

*Sequel of sciences and arts. Of logick. Of certain arguments of Mr. Voltaire.*

It is not sufficient to write in an easy, pleasing manner, there must be sound reasoning besides. Without this the most brilliant style will only dazzle the writer, and deceive the reader.

We are far from thinking, sir, that you have neglected this part so necessary to a good writer. On the contrary, we are fully persuaded that you possess it in an eminent degree; but if we are not mista-

(1) *Some learned Christians.* See Defence of the Books of the Old Testament, Supplement to the Philosophy of History, Refutation of certain articles in the Philosophical Dictionary, &c.



ken, you sometimes soar so high above the common rules of logic, that the generality of readers can hardly perceive the whole strength of your arguments. Of this we have given several instances; we shall now produce a few more selected by chance, just as they fell in our way.

§ 1. *Of the Jewish writings.*

We believe that our sacred writings have been inspired. All sects of Christians look upon them in the same light. Let us see how you reason in consequence of this.

TEXT. "You must know that all the writings of the Jewish nation were necessary to the world, for how could God inspire useless writings? And if these writings were necessary, how comes it that any of them were lost or corrupted?" (Letter of a Quaker.)

COMMENT. Probably, sir, you thought this an excellent argument; but perhaps some readers will think otherwise. We confess it, we are of the number.

1st, We did not know that any one is obliged to think, that all the writings of the Jewish nation were necessary to the world; nobody ever said or thought it before you. How useful it is to read you!

2dly, Must writings be necessary to the world to make God inspire them? May he not inspire such as may be useful at certain times and to certain persons? And could you prove, that the lost writings of the Jewish nation have not been useful in the times, and to the persons for whom they were written?

3dly, It appears too, that there is some difference between being *useful* and being *necessary*, between being useful to some persons, and being necessary to the world; and we have reason to believe that he who confounds these terms does not reason very justly.

Lastly, Some people will think that you ought to have named those sacred books of the Jews, which



you suppose to have been corrupted ; for we know none of them that have been corrupted in any important and essential point. Perhaps you do not take this word in the common acceptation. If this be the case, you should inform your readers of it in the new edition.

§ 2. *Of certain resurrections.*

Our sacred writings speak of some particular resurrections, operated by our prophets ; we read of such too in your sacred writings ; but all these facts, sir, appear very improbable to you ; you think you can demonstrate the impossibility of them yourself, and in order to do it you thus reason.

TEXT. “ To make a dead man rise again, at the  
“ end of some days, it is necessary that all the im-  
“ perceptible parts of his body, which had been ex-  
“ haled in the air, and which the winds had carried  
“ off, should return to their proper places ; that the  
“ worms, birds, and animals that have fed on the  
“ corpse should restore each what it took away.  
“ The worms which have fattened on the entrails of  
“ this man have been eaten by swallows, these swal-  
“ lows have been devoured by other birds, and these  
“ again by hawks, these hawks again by vultures ;  
“ each of these must restore precisely what belonged  
“ to the dead man, otherwise he cannot be the same  
“ person.”

COMMENT. What rapidity of imagination, sir ! In the space of some days, that is at most of two or three, you see a man dead, and the worms grown fat on his entrails, and these worms eaten by swallows. This is very sudden, but this is not all ; you see again these swallows devoured by other birds, these again by hawks, and these again by vultures ; all this in so short a time ! Truly, this is going on at a great rate, the ordinary process of nature is more slow.

However, as there is nothing utterly impossible in these suppositions, we see no inconvenience in granting them to you.



But, sir, is it absolutely necessary, in order that this man should rise again and be the same person, that all the imperceptible parts of his body, which had been exhaled in the air, should come each into its own place, and that all the animals, fed with this substance, should restore to it exactly what belonged to it? Does a man cease to be the same person as soon as he loses any of those imperceptible parts which he had before? We think that one might lose some very perceptible parts of the body, without ceasing to be the same person. Suppose an officer loses an arm or a leg in battle by a cannon-ball; and let this leg or arm be devoured by ravenous beasts, which in their turn shall be devoured by others, does this officer cease to be the same man because he wants a leg or an arm? And when the king rewards him for his bravery, does he bestow the cross of Saint Lewis on another person?

Let us suppose (which God forbid, as we sincerely love you) that the reading of some bad piece of criticism, ours for instance, should throw you into a fever, and that in consequence of this you should lose some ounces of blood; would you on this account no longer be Mr. Voltaire? And suppose your blood was cast into some place where it was eaten by worms, then these worms were consumed by swallows, these again by other birds, and these again by hawks, and these again by vultures; would it be necessary, in order to your being the same person, that all these animals should restore to you precisely whatever belonged to you? Are you so great a philosopher, and yet ignorant of this, that what belongs to you is not essentially yourself?

But let us not dwell on such dismal suppositions. You perspire, we suppose; the imperceptible parts of your body are continually exhaled in the air; by this perspiration you may probably lose this day about two pounds of these imperceptible parts. And when you get up to-morrow morning, shall you no longer be Mr. Voltaire?



Therefore this triumphant argument against the possibility of resurrections, is not very sound; and when you formed it, you had not the principles of metaphysics on the identity of persons, present in your mind!

§ 3. *The understanding of beasts proved by this expression, 'Their blood shall be upon them.'*

TEXT. "It is said in Leviticus, that if a woman lies with a beast, she shall be killed with the beast, and their blood shall be upon them. This expression, *their blood shall be upon them*, shews evidently that beasts were then supposed to have some understanding." (Treatise of Toleration.)

COMMENT. Some people will be apt to think that there is one word too much here, the word, *evidently*. And indeed, is it not prostituting it, to apply it to such an argument as this? What a distance, fir, between the premises and the conclusion which you draw! You clear, with one leap, the interval that separates them; but all your readers will not be able to perceive that connexion which you see between them; we think at least that it will not appear *evident* to them. This word, fir, should not be lavished; you make too frequent use of it.

§ 4. *An extraordinary method of proving that they wrote only upon stone in the time of Moses.*

You have absolutely settled it, fir, that in the time of our legislator they wrote only on stone. The falsehood and folly of this opinion do not stop you; you are so strongly attached to it that nothing can undeceive you; you even think that you can make your readers believe it, and in order to prove it, you say,

TEXT. "It is so true that they wrote only on stone then, that the author of the Book of Joshua says, that Deuteronomy was written on an altar of unhewed stones covered with mortar. Probably Joshua did not intend that this book should last long." (Caloyer.)



COMMENT. Here is false reasoning, and a silly joke, sir.

*False reasoning*, for do you not perceive that it amounts to this? It is saying this plainly, Joshua wrote upon mortar, therefore at that time they wrote only on stone; or Joshua wrote Deuteronomy on stone, therefore he did not intend that this book should last long.

*Silly joke*; for if there is any humour in it, it is only on supposition that Joshua did write on mortar, and that this mortar was of the same nature as ours. But if this mortar was a kind of stucco, capable of resisting the injuries of weather, especially in such a climate as that of Palestine, which many learned men have thought; or if this mortar served only to cement the stones on which Joshua wrote, as others suppose with good reason, what becomes of your joke!

Certainly, sir, when a man reasons and jests in this manner, he must have a great fund of wit to procure himself readers.

§. 1. *Of Ninus, the founder of Ninivé.*

You have another very extraordinary way of reasoning, sir; you conclude from the termination of a man's name whether he ever existed or not.

TEXT. "There never was a Ninus, founder of  
"Ninvah, called by us Ninivé, no more than a Be-  
"lus founder of Babylon; no Asiatick prince ever  
"had a name in us." (Philos. Dictionary.)

COMMENT. *Ninvah called by us Ninivé*, is certainly a noble stroke of erudition. But what shall we think of this argument; *No Asiatick prince ever had a name in us, therefore there was no such person as Ninus, the founder of Ninivé!* Is not this just as if a man affirmed that there never was such a person as Pompey, because no Roman general ever had a name ending in *y*? This might be answered by saying, that there never was a Pompey at Rome, but that there lived at Rome a person called Pompeius, whom the English call Pompey. Does this



change of termination prevent the existence of that Roman?

This kind of argument is so pleasing to you, you find it so convincing, that you use it with the greatest confidence in various parts of your works.

By this you endeavour to invalidate what Josephus the historian relates, that Alexander was received by the Jewish high-priest.

TEXT. "Alexander was received by the high-priest Jaddus, that is supposing there ever existed a Jewish priest called Jaddus." (Philos. of Hist.)

COMMENT. This Jewish priest was not called Jaddus, but Joad or Joiada. But does it follow that the high-priest did not receive Alexander, and that Josephus is a liar, because this high priest Joad or Joiada is called Jaddus in French and Jaddous in Greek? This is an uncommon way of reasoning.

§ 6. *Tower of Babel.*

TEXT. "Almost all the commentators think themselves obliged to suppose, that the famous tower built at Babylon, to observe the heavenly bodies, was a fragment of the tower of Babel, which men wanted to raise up to heaven. It is not well known what commentators mean by heaven; is it the moon? Is it the planet Venus? All this is very far from us."

COMMENT. Perhaps, sir, you may say, that this is rather a joke than a piece of reasoning. But what a wretched joke, and how ill placed! Do you not know that to raise up to heaven, means only to raise very high? It is a common expression in all languages, even in yours. We say every day, to raise a building up to heaven, mountains which raise their heads (1) to heaven. If any little critick

(1) These words recal to our minds the following verses of a great poet,

*J'ai vu l'Impie adoré sur la terre;*

*Pareil au cèdre, il portoit dans les cieux*

*Son front audacieux;*

*Il sembloit à son gré gouverner le tonnerre.*

*Fouloit aux pieds ses ennemis vaincus*

*Je n'ai fait que passer, il n'étoit déjà plus.*



should ask, what do you mean by heaven? By raising up to heaven? Is it the planet Venus? All this is very far from us; this would make us laugh certainly, but at whom, and for what?

§ 7. *Of the word Babel.*

Your reasoning is as bad with regard to the word Babel. This word puzzles you.

TEXT. "I know not why it is said in Genesis, "that Babel signifies confusion." (Philos. Diction.)

COMMENT. We are amazed at your doubt, sir. Since you understand the Caldean language, as appears by all your works, you might guess that Babel, by an abbreviation, of which there are many examples in all languages, comes from *Balbel*, a Caldean word, which they say signifies *confusion*.

To this you prefer another derivation; you derive *Babel* from the words *Ba* and *Bel*. You say,

TEXT. "*Ba* signifies father in the oriental tongues, and *Bel* signifies God, *Babel* signifies the "city of God."

COMMENT. *Ba* signifies father, *Bel* signifies God, therefore Babel signifies *the city of God*; this, sir, is the general strain of your logick. We think your proper conclusion should have been, therefore Babel signifies father God or father *Bel*. Thus your derivation is neither very clear nor very agreeable to reason.

§ 8. *Of the Pythonissa, and of the word Python.*

TEXT. "The Pythonissa of Endor, which raised "the shade of Samuel, is well known. Certainly "however it is very extraordinary that this Greek "word Python was known by the Jews in the time "of Saul; many learned men have concluded from "hence, that this account was not written 'till af- "ter the Jews had some acquaintance with the "Greeks, after the time of Alexander." (Philos. of History.

These are certainly good verses, altho' they are imitations of the Hebrew. Does Mr. Voltaire deem these words unintelligible, *il portoit dans les cieux son front audacieux*? And would he venture to ask Racine the question about the moon and the planet Venus.



COMMENT. (1) The word *Python* which is Greek, and Greek of late date, which, so far from being found in the Hebrew text, cannot be found in the Greek septuagint version, which in short cannot be seen any where but in the Vulgate; this word *was known by the Jews in the time of Saul!* Surely nothing can be more wonderful! But who told you, sir, that they knew this word, and what could put such an extraordinary thing in your head?

*Many learned men have concluded from hence, &c.* What, because the word *Python*, of Greek origin, is found in the Vulgate, therefore these learned men conclude, that the Hebrew text, in which it is not to be found, was not written until after the Jews had some acquaintance with the Greeks, after Alexander's time. These are excellent logicians, sir, admirable reasoners! You repeat the same argument in the Treatise on Toleration.

TEXT. "It may be observed again, that it is very extraordinary that the word *Python* is found in Deuteronomy, a long time before this Greek word could be known by the Hebrews; and agreeably to this it is not in the Hebrew."

COMMENT. What do you mean here, sir? What! It is extraordinary, and very extraordinary, that a Greek word, which could not be known by the Hebrews, is not found in the Hebrew! It is extraordinary, that this Greek word, which became Latin by common use, is found in a Latin translation! No,

(1) *The word Python which is Greek.* The Hebrew word which answers to python is Ob, the Greek word of the Septuagint, and of the fathers of the Greek church, is *Engastrimuthos*. See Supplement.

The *Engastrimuthoi* or ventriloqui were a kind of wizards, who pretended to foretell future events in a low voice which seemed to proceed from their bellies or from under the earth; many people have denied the possibility of thus speaking, but some of the learned among the moderns, Eugubinus, Cælius Rhodoginus, Oleaster, &c. attest that they have seen men and women *engastrimuthoi*, and that these persons could answer such questions as were put to them exactly with their bellies; there have been recent instances of this too; the author of the *Dictionnaire de Trevoux*, (article ventriloque,) says that he knew an officer who spoke with his belly, and who for sport used to alarm his comrades by this practice. *Edit.*



fir, there is nothing extraordinary in all this, but the extraordinary manner of reasoning.

If we, poor ignorant people, had reasoned thus, how you would have handled us! Happily for us our logick goes step by step; it has not that rapid and transcendant progress which yours has.

You say somewhere, that poor Rousseau never made a good syllogism. It is certain that (1) *the citizen of that little commonwealth which borders on your domain*, has not always reasoned justly. But consider, fir, whether you reason better than him, and whether you could venture to meet him syllogistically. You shew contempt for his logick, and indeed he cannot set much value upon yours.

Behold these great teachers of men! What an excellent scholar will he become, who takes these new doctors for preceptors, who are charging one another with never having known the principles of true reasoning!

## E I G H T E E N T H    E X T R A C T.

*Of certain sciences and arts. Sequel. Of the art of casting metals. Examination of an article taken out of les Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.*

It seems then, fir, that you have done us the honour of a reading; and whilst you observe a deep and fullen silence with regard to so many other works of the learned, in which Christians of all sects, Quakers, Protestants, Roman Catholicks, &c. have, perhaps in a stronger manner than we have done, attacked your prejudices and your errors, you vouchsafe to answer us.

It is not because our letters have appeared to you more strongly and solidly written, or that we treat in them of more important subjects, or that we present them in a more engaging manner; no, fir, you

(1) *Citizen of that little commonwealth, &c.* By this periphrasis, Mr. Voltaire denotes the commonwealth of Geneva.



have not so favourable an idea of our feeble essays; and we are better acquainted with the value of them.

But a parcel of poor wretched Jews, strangers, who scarcely understand your language, have appeared less dangerous adversaries. Such is the nature of philosophical generosity! It spares the formidable enemy, and attacks the weak one who is likely to yield an easy triumph.

We feel our inferiority, sir. A strong party, powerful protectors, a brilliant and merited reputation, extent of knowledge, graces of style, &c. all these advantages are on your side, but truth is on our's; in her company, there is always strength, let the adversary be every so powerful. With the confidence therefore which truth inspires, we shall now attempt to examine the answer you have honoured us with.

§ 1. *Observations on the title of Mr. Voltaire's answer to two of our letters.*

No doubt you intended that your answer should abound in wit; for the very title of it is witty.

TEXT. “*Casting.* The art of casting considerable figures of gold or brass; answer to a man who is of another calling.” (Questions sur l'Encyclopedie, Art. Fonte.)

COMMENT. This title, sir, abounds in wit, we allow it; but would it not have been more ingenious and more true too, to have said, *the art of casting considerable figures of about three feet. Answer to a man who is of another calling; by a man who is of that calling.*

These expressions, *considerable figures of about three feet*, would make a lovely contrast, and would surprise the reader agreeably. And nothing can be truer than these other words, *by a man who is of that calling*; for certainly you are of it, sir, we see it at once.

§ 2. *A little stratagem of the learned founder.*



But since you are of that calling, sir, since you are such a perfect master of the art of casting metals, why have you recourse to these little stratagems which unfair disputants deal in? You begin by changing the state of the question.

TEXT. "The question is whether, without the help of a miracle, a figure of gold could be cast in one night."

COMMENT. This is not at all the question, sir; neither Exodus relates it, nor have we ever asserted that Aaron cast the golden-calf in one night; consequently this is a false exposition, and a little stratagem.

In that part of your works which we were confuting, you spoke of one day, and in your answer, you speak of one night. What advantage have you, sir, in changing the day into night? Your assertion will not by this become more true; we have denied it, and we deny it again.

Yes, sir, (you oblige us to assume a style that may be displeasing to you.) Yes, it is false, very false, absolutely false, that Exodus or any other book of scripture says, that Aaron spent but one day or one night in casting the golden calf, nor have we in any place asserted it.

You assumed this point without giving proofs; you answer us without producing any; you can never produce any; we would defy you to do it, if it was decent to defy a man whom we respect.

### § 3. *Another little stratagem.*

You are not satisfied with changing the state of the question; you bring on another little stratagem. You make us say just the contrary of what we have said.

TEXT. "It has been asserted, that nothing is easier than to cast a statue in three days, which might easily be seen by two or three millions of souls."

COMMENT. You mean probably, sir, by two or three millions *at once*, for the smallest statue



might be seen by two or three millions *successively*.

But where have you found that our letter speaks, of a statue that might be easily seen by two or three millions of souls at once? Produce the place, sir, or confess that you knowingly charge us with an absurdity of which we have not been guilty.

A statue, which might easily be seen by two or three millions of souls at a time, must necessarily be a large statue. Now, so far from ever having said or thought that the golden calf was a large statue, we told you that one of your mistakes was your representing it to yourself like *the groupe in the Place des Victoires, or the Laocœon at Marly*. We observed to you, that it was made to be carried at the head of the army, and that a portable statue cannot be a large one. Therefore you make us say just the contrary of what we have said. A noble and liberal way of defence indeed! This is a new and convincing proof of that love of truth which guides your pen!

§ 4. *False things laid to our charge by him.*

You go on with the same candour, and say,

TEXT. “ They have wrote against us and  
“ against all ancient and modern sculptors, for want  
“ of having consulted the work-houses. The autho-  
“ rity of commentators is put in opposition to that  
“ of artists. Arts are not to be treated of in this  
way.

COMMENT. *They have wrote against us, &c.*  
Wrote against you and against all the sculptors, sir!  
God forbid! we never had such a thought. We  
have too much respect for you, and esteem for  
them.

We allow that thro’ zeal for your character, and  
desire of contributing, if possible, to the perfection  
of your works, we took the liberty of pointing out  
some mistakes to you into which you had fallen.  
But, if we are not deceived, this is not writing against  
you. Attach yourself as closely as you please to your



prejudices, false assertions, and errors, we shall always think it our duty to distinguish you from them.

We shall be cautious especially, of ascribing the opinions of such an artist as you are, to all the ancient and modern sculptors. We feel how unjust this proceeding would be, and how unfair with regard to you.

*For want of having consulted the work-houses, &c.* We have consulted them, sir, be assured of it. If it was necessary, we could name several of them to you; and we have not put the authority of commentators in opposition to them. Thus the arts are treated. Is this the way you have always treated them?

§ 5. *Of certain noble secrets invented by the great artist.*

You proceed in your joking way, and you say comically enough,

TEXT. “The business of a founder is the only thing in question; it is not needful to consult Artapanus, Berofus, Manetho, to know how a statue should be made, such as may be seen by the whole army of Xerxes in march.”

COMMENT. You do us too much honour, sir. To you it belongs to consult Artapanus, Berofus, Manetho. These names we read in many parts of your works; they are not to be found in any part of ours. It would indeed be a noble thing to see such ignorant people as we are, quoting Artapanus and Manetho with regard to statues; we are too well acquainted with our own powers and with theirs too.

When we shall wish to be informed of a thing, which is indeed very well worth knowing, how to make a statue which may be seen by an army of a million of men in march, such as that of Xerxes, we will not consult the ancient authors of Egypt and Caldea. We will apply to a writer of later date, and much better instructed in the business of a foun-



der ; to you, fir, who are of that calling, and versed in all its secrets.

No, fir, none but such a founder as you, and of so lively, fruitful, and political an imagination as yours, could be capable of convincing and executing a statue which could be seen by the army of Xerxes in march.

Truly, fir, this is not an easy job. An army of a million, or even of half a million of men in march, must cover a great piece of ground ; and you cannot suppose that every foldier had a telescope in his pocket. Be assured, fir, that without the help of telescopes, it would have been hard for such an army in march to see a statue even of natural size. Certainly, something larger would be necessary in this case ; for instance, the Colossus of Arona, mounted perhaps on the Trajan pillar. Now, (1) the Colossus of Arona, incorporated with the Trajan pillar, and cast along with it, especially in a single cast, would make indeed a pretty considerable molton statue.

You certainly know, fir, the proper process for executing such a piece of work ; and as your talents for mechanicks are as great as for casting metals, you also certainly know what the Vaucansons, the Laurents, the Lauriots do not know, by what mechanical invention such a statue might be borne at the head of an army. Truly, fir, you are possessed of wonderful secrets ! We hope you will not much longer rob the world of them.

§ 6. *Reasons which the illustrious writer alledges, to shew that it is impossible, without the help of a miracle, in less than six months to cast a golden calf of three feet, coarsely executed.*

This is a poor joke ! you will say. Be it so. Let us say no more of your army of Xerxes in march, and of our Colossus of Arona. Let us speak

(1) *The Colossus of Arona.* It was a great Colossal statue erected in honour of Charles Borromeus, Archbishop of Milan, in his native country Arona. *Christ.*



only of a statue of three feet : How much time is requisite, to cast a golden calf of three feet, coarsely executed?

TEXT. " Six months at least."

COMMENT. Six months, sir ! this is a great deal. If you had sufficient proof of this, sir, you would oblige us to give up the account in the Pentateuch, or to have recourse to a miracle. Let us now see what are your proofs.

The first is a description, in twenty articles, of the processes which are now used, for casting large copper-figures.

TEXT. " This is the manner of casting a statue of only three feet. 1st, They make a model in fuller's earth. 2dly, This model is covered with a mould in plaister; by fitting the pieces of plaister one to another, &c. &c. &c."

COMMENT. We allow that this description (which some artist probably gave you) is, excepting some omissions, pretty exact, and that it may be easily understood by persons of that calling. As to those who are not of this calling, they had better add to it the words *Fonte, in the Encyclopedie, and the Dictionnaire des beaux Arts by Lacombe*. By the help of these two comments, they may understand some parts, which are not explained with sufficient clearness for them, beginning at the second and fifth articles, &c. &c.

We allow again, that this method is generally followed now in casting large bronze statues; such for instance, as those in your publick places; and even sometimes when they are casting bronze statues of three feet, of extraordinary elegance, intended as ornaments for the cabinets of rich curiosos.

But is this an ancient method? Does it go back as far as the time of Moses? Are all these processes indispensably necessary? Can none of them be left out? Was it never possible, and is it, not possible now to substitute others in their stead, more



quick and expeditious? In short, were there not formerly, and are there not at this day, other methods of casting a golden statue of three feet in less than six months? These things, sir, you do not prove, and you ought to prove them; without this your learned description is absolutely thrown away. We grant you, that there are processes which may require six months; but we will deny your assertion if you say that there are none which will require less time.

To this first proof, not very convincing indeed, you add another; which is the authority of one of your most famous artists,

TEXT. "I asked Mr. Pigal, how much time he would require to make an horse, only three feet high, in bronze. He answered me in writing, I require six months at least. I have this declaration dated 3d June, 1770.

COMMENT. We make no doubt of this, sir, as you affirm it; but what can you conclude from it? Mr. Pigal, a famous artist, opulent and in great business, requires six months at least, to cast in bronze an horse three feet high; therefore an inferior artist would require the same time! Mr. Pigal, jealous of his reputation, and who wishes to let nothing go out of his hands but master-pieces, would use curious and extraordinary processes in this case; therefore there are not any methods more simple! Mr. Pigal requires six months at least to cast in bronze a figure of three feet, performed with care, elegance, and that fine finishing which he gives to all his works; therefore the same time is requisite to make a golden figure, coarsely executed!

We think, sir, that, without pretending to more knowledge than Mr. Pigal in the art of casting metals, we may pronounce these consequences ill deduced; and that the denying them is not denying truth.

§ 7. *Whether, and how a golden calf of three feet might be cast, not only in less than six months, but in a fortnight or even in a week.*



Before we proceed farther, permit us to observe, that in order to justify the account in Exodus, no more is strictly required than the possibility of casting a golden calf in three weeks or a month. For as the scripture has not determined either the time which Aaron took to make the golden calf, or the moment in which the Israelites began to murmur at the absence of their leader; we may suppose that they began to be weary of his absence at the end of ten, fifteen, or twenty days, having been accustomed to see him go up and come down from the mountain every day. Thus Aaron may have had three weeks or even a month, to make the golden calf. Now, there cannot be the least doubt, altho' you seem to entertain one, of the possibility of making a golden calf even of three feet, in three weeks or a month.

But could a golden calf of three feet be cast in a fortnight, or even in a week? We have affirmed that it can be done, and we affirm it again. You say,

TEXT. "If they had applied to Mr. Pigal or Mr. le Moine, they would have changed their opinion."

COMMENT. We own, sir, we did not apply to Pigal or le Moine. It is not needful to apply to the Thidiases of France, to get a statue made of three feet coarsely executed.

But, even if we had consulted them, we should not, in all probability, have changed our opinion. If we had mentioned a golden statue, and told them that we wished for dispatch in the execution, rather than high finishing in the work, these great men would have been (1) kind enough to point out to us

(1) *Kind enough.* This kindness we have experienced. Since the answer with which Mr. Voltaire has honoured us, we have had an opportunity of consulting Mr. Guyard, that excellent disciple of the immortal Bouchardon, a man born to replace his master. This great artist recommended us to one of his friends, a goldsmith, who required but eight days for this work. *Aut.*



inferior artists, who follow an easier method, and use more expeditious processes.

Such artists there are, sir ; and there is at this time, a much more expeditious method of casting metals, than that of which you give us so long a description. Probably you were not ignorant of it, sir, altho' you would seem so ; for you add with an air of triumph,

TEXT. " They have consulted none but founders of pewter plates, or of other little works, that are cast in sand."

COMMENT. At last, sir, the word escapes you ! *They cast in sand*, yes, sir, they cast in sand, and not *only pewter plates and other little works*, but also chandeliers, vases, figures of copper, gold and silver, of one, two, three feet high, and even sometimes higher. Apply, sir, not to *founders of pewter plates*, but to founders in copper, to such goldsmiths as work for churches, and be assured that, whenever you shall require it, they will cast you in sand an horse of copper, or a calf three feet high and more, in less than six months, and even in less than three weeks, without a miracle.

These are the shops and the artists which we have consulted, and which you ought to have consulted yourself, as you were looking out for the most expeditious process for casting a portable statue ; there you might have been satisfied by ocular demonstration, just as we were, that the method of casting figures of three feet, which you have described in twenty articles, is not the only one in use, even in your own time ; that a more simple operation may be substituted in its place ; in short, that it is very possible, without a miracle, to cast a statue of three feet, not only in less than six months, but even in less than a fortnight.

Perhaps you may ask us, where we found the artists, who offered to make us a statue of gold or copper, in a fortnight or even in a week. Where, sir ? At Rotterdam, Brussels, Antwerp ; at Paris, Rue



Guerin-Boisseau, Rue des Arcis, Pont-au Change, Quai des Orfevres, &c. But as we told you before, we promised them the materials, workmen, if they were wanted, and even a model, that is, to those who required but (1) three days for the work. We leave them at liberty to make it of one or (2) of several casts; and we told them over and over, that we did not want a statue highly finished, retouched, burnished, &c. &c. and we said, that altho' it should be so ill made, that a man might *take the head of a calf for that of an ass*, we would be satisfied with it.

§ 8. *A sure way for the learned writer to clear up all his doubts with respect to this matter.*

Have you still any doubts, sir? The following is an easy method of satisfying them. Deposit in the hands of a notary one hundred marks of bar-gold, and one hundred thousand livres in money; enter into a public engagement, properly drawn up, to give this whole sum to that founder, who in the shortest time shall cast such a figure as we have described.

If no artist can be found capable of executing this in eight days, we promise to make a public retraction and confession of our ignorance.

As you are sure that a golden calf of three feet, cannot be cast in less than six months, you run no risk; and if you did run any risk, what are an hundred marks of gold, and one hundred thousand livres to a rich man and a philosopher?

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(1) *Three days.* We were informed that the workmen at Paris were not remarkable for executing at the time promised, and that in making a bargain with them it was necessary to bind them up by great forfeitures, if the work was not completely done in the space of time given. We freely own that we did not follow this method with those who required but three days from us, but we were very careful to bind those up who required eight. *Aut.*

(2) *Of several casts.* Pliny the elder observes, that the Egyptian artists were so skilful in proportions, that the different parts of a statue were distributed to different workmen, who executed them separately. It was sufficient to know the height of the statue, to make all the limbs in due proportion. Then the only business was to put them together, and it is well known that soldering in gold and silver is easier than in brass. Perhaps the workmen Aaron employed were not so skilful, but might they not follow this method and form their statue by their several casts? *Aut.*



Enter into this agreement then, fir. You will not pay too high for the triple satisfaction of informing yourself, instructing the world, and bringing us to confusion. If you refuse to come into it, we shall suppose you sufficiently answered, and we shall think ourselves dispensed from giving you any answer hereafter, let you say what you will on the art of casting metals.

### N I N E T E E N T H E X T R A C T.

*Of some sciences and arts. Sequel. Of chymistry. Examination of an article taken out of the Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.*

§ 1. *Some learned processes, &c. known to the learned chymist.*

We think, fir, that we have answered you very fully on the art of casting metals. Shall we be able to make as good a defence with respect to chymistry?

Here especially, you shew all the depth and extent of your knowledge. Must we not form the highest ideas of it when we read what follows?

TEXT. "I reduced gold into paste with mercury. "I dissolved it with aqua regia. . . I never could calcine it. . . The great heat liquefies gold, but does not calcine it." (Questions Encyclopediques, article Fonte.)

COMMENT. You are acquainted with these learned processes! You have made these curious experiments, these sublime and uncommon discoveries! What a mighty chymist you are! O Stahl, Beker, Geoffroi, Lemerier, Lavoisier, Baumé, Cadet, chymists of this nation, foreign chymists, bow your heads, acknowledge your master. He reduces gold into paste with mercury, and he dissolves it with aqua regia, &c. O the wonderful secrets! What an honour it is to us, that this profound chymist can produce nothing against us except the petty processes of quacks!



§ 2. *He changes the state of the question again.*

Yes, fir, you attack us with regard to chymistry, by changing again the state of the question.

TEXT. "The question was whether a golden figure, cast in a single night, can, without a miracle, be reduced into powder next day."

COMMENT. *Next day.* Is it precisely next day? In a single day? No, fir, the question was not whether a statue of gold can be reduced into powder in a single day. We defy you to produce any passage in our sacred writings that says this, or any place in which we have asserted that Moses reduced the golden calf into powder in a single day. What shall we never have truth?

TEXT. "The question was whether it was possible to reduce a golden figure into powder by casting it into the fire. This was precisely the question."

COMMENT. This was not the question at all. You had asserted, *that the most learned chymistry could not reduce gold into potable powder.* This is a general assertion without exceptions; and we denied it, because it was false in general. At length you perceive the mistake, and in order to get rid of it, you cunningly add these words, *by casting it into the fire.*

But these words are not to be found either in the note which we were then answering, nor in three or four other places of your writings which were then before us.

To say now that the question was whether a golden figure can be reduced into powder in one day, *by casting it into the fire,* is evidently changing the state of the question. This is a poor stratagem which you should have left to those vain weak men, who, when they find themselves mistaken, have not fortitude enough to own it.

§ 3. *He makes us say what we have not said,*

You continue to make defence in chymistry, as you did before, on the art of casting metals.



TEXT. "They pretend that the reduction of gold  
" into potable powder by burning it, is the most easy  
" and common operation of chymistry."

COMMENT. *They pretend.* Great man, *you have not lied, but you have said the (1) thing that is not.* No, we do not pretend this.

We have pretended and do still pretend, that the reduction of gold into powder, to such a degree as to render it potable, is a very easy and common operation in chymistry. But we did not say any where that this was to be done by *calcining* it.

*They pretend.* And in order to prove this, you quote a long passage out of our letters, in which we do not pretend it. The proof is excellent!

No, sir, we have not spoke of burning or calcining gold, either in this passage, or in any other part of our letters. Indeed the word *fusion* may be found there; but *fusion* is not *calcination*. Gold comes to a state of fusion, but not of calcination. Did you, O learned chymist, take the one for the other, and thus confound ideas so heterogeneous?

You answer us merely by making us say what we have not said. This proceeding is artful; but we submit it to you whether it is honourable. You add somewhat peevishly,

TEXT. "If any one has told you that Mr. Rou-  
" elle calcines gold in the fire, he is joking with you,  
" or he has told you a foolish thing, which you  
" ought not to repeat, no more than all the rest of  
" that nonsense which you transcribe with regard to  
" potable gold."

COMMENT. *If any one has told you, &c.* We have not been told, nor did we tell you, that Mr. Rouelle calcines gold in the fire.

When you make us say and repeat this nonsense, you calumniate us, sir, and you trifle a little too openly with your readers.

(1) *Thing that is not.* See the Quaker's Letter. *Edit.*



We think too, that what we transcribed with respect to potable gold, was not nonsense. We transcribed the precepts of Stahl and Senac, who were not fools, and never wrote nonsense.

What, sir, can you not answer us any way but by calling all the chymists in the world fools! Do you not see that our cause will soon become theirs?

§ 4. *Mr. Voltaire's potable gold.*

We mentioned to you the potable gold of the chymists; and you object to us the potable gold of the quacks. You give a receipt for it. So deep a chymist are you, that this latter is the only potable gold you are acquainted with in chymistry!

TEXT. "Potable gold is a piece of quackery; a mountebank trick to deceive people. Those who sell their potable gold to fools, do not put two grains of gold into their liquor; or if they put a little into it, they have dissolved it in aqua regia, and they swear to you that it is potable gold without acid. They strip the gold, as much as possible, of its aqua regia; they load it with oil of rosemary. These preparations are very dangerous; real poisons, and those who sell them deserve correction."

COMMENT. *Potable gold is a piece of quackery, &c.* Yes, sir, that kind of potable gold of which you give the receipt, the potable gold of quacks, a pretended specifick but a real poison. But the potable gold of which we spoke to you is no quackery, sir, it is neither a poison nor a specifick.

And yet you address us in these words,

TEXT. "Such is your potable gold, of which you speak rather rashly, as you do of every thing else."

COMMENT. No, sir, this is not our potable gold, it is yours, it is the potable gold of mountebanks. Ours is that of Stahl, of Senac, and of all the chymists; and we have not spoke rashly of it, nor of any thing else.



§ 5. *Potable gold of the chymists.*

It seems then, sir, that altho' you are acquainted with the potable gold of mountebanks, you have not an idea of that of chymists. We had however given you the process of it. As you have not attended to it, probably because we delivered it in a few words, we shall now lay it before you at full length, such as we read it in Senac's chymistry.

"In order to render gold potable, says this learned physician, Moses could not use simple calcination, nor amalgamation, nor cementation. But Mr. Stahl has removed all the difficulties that can be made on this subject. The method which he thinks Moses used, is very simple; this is it.

"*Stahl's potable gold.* Take three parts of salt of tartar, and two of salt-petre, which dissolve in the crucible; throw in one part of gold, it will dissolve in it perfectly. After the fusion take the substance from the fire, you will find an hepar sulphuris which will pulverize; put this hepar sulphuris into water, it will easily dissolve in it; filtrate the water, it will be red and loaded with gold. This forms a potable gold of a disagreeable taste, very like that of brimstone powder."

Mr. Grosse, of the Academy of Sciences, expresses himself nearly in the same terms, in his *Memoire*, given in 1733.

"The process, he says, pointed out by Mr. Stahl, is to make an hepar with sulphur and a fixed alkali. When this hepar is in fusion at the fire, if gold be thrown into it, it divides it so, and retains it so strongly, that when this mixture is dissolved by water, the gold passes with the solution of the hepar thro' the filtrating paper."

What think you of this, sir? Is not gold, which passes thro' a filtrating paper, reduced into parts small enough to be swallowed?

Such is the potable gold of chymists; and such is ours; you see that aqua regia and oil of rosemary are not ingredients in it, as they are in that of the



mountebanks. Do you still think that we have spoke of it rashly? And do you think, that after quoting Senac, as we did, we could say or believe that chymistry renders gold potable *by calcining it*?

§ 6. *Of the late Mr. Rouelle, and of the respect he had for Mr. Voltaire's chymistry.*

A propos with regard to your chymistry, we had quoted Mr. Rouelle, whom your academy of sciences has since lost. You do us the honour of mentioning this passage from our edition of 1769 at *Laurence Prault's*, you say, *with approbation and privilege*; but in mentioning it you indulge yourself in two little pieces of art.

You add some words to it which we had expunged out of this edition lest they should offend you, and you retrench from it some flattering expressions which we had inserted with respect to you. Probably both these things are done thro' modesty.

But prithee, sir, when you quote us next time, less modesty and more truth! But more especially, sir, we beseech you not to make us say what we have not said, and even the contrary of what we have said.

Let us return to Mr. Rouelle.

TEXT. "There was a Mr. Rouelle, a learned  
"chymist and apothecary to the king, who went  
"with an officer of the revenue in 1753, to Col-  
"mar, where I have a small estate. He was com-  
"ing to try an earth, which a chymist of deux Ponts  
"proposed to change into salt-petre. I told Mr.  
"Rouelle that he would make no salt-petre; he  
"asked me why? Because says I, I do not believe  
"in transmutations; I think there can be none;  
"God has made all things, and men can only assem-  
"ble and divide."

COMMENT. You have a *small estate at Colmar*. We rejoice at it, sir; you never will have so great a fortune as we wish you. We are informed that benevolence and generosity chiefly direct the disposal of it; we gladly take this opportunity of giving you



deserved praise. May all the rich employ their stores as you do, in relieving the indigent, and making men happy.

You do not believe in transmutators. You are right; many people have repented their too great faith in them. Much money is spent with them without any certainty of making gold; you act wisely in not trusting them with your gold.

However, we can scarcely think that the transmutators will be knocked down by the little argument you propose against them. They may grant you, that God has made every thing and yet answer you that in their transmutations they do not pretend to create, but only to assemble and divide; that no transmutator proposes to make the substance, but to change the arrangement and configuration of the parts; which is not strictly *making*.

We doubt besides whether Mr. Rouelle, whom you call a learned chymist, and who is really so, wanted any of your lessons; and that you were under a necessity of proving to him that he could not make salt-petre.

However, the Mr. Rouelle whom we quote, is not the one of whom you speak, but his elder brother, Mr. Rouelle of the Academy of Sciences.

TEXT. "I cannot tell whether Mr. Rouelle puts himself in a passion, when a man happens to differ from him in opinion."

COMMENT. Mr. Rouelle, sir, was an enthusiast in chymistry; false reasonings on this science fretted him, they say, in a very singular, and sometimes comical manner.

This small failing was compensated by some excellent qualities. Some allowances must be made to great men, sir. This is a maxim with us; and it cannot be displeasing to you.

When, in order to fret him, your authority was put in opposition to his; Mr. Voltaire, he would answer with fire, Mr. Voltaire is a fine speaker, but



with all his fine speeches he speaks very incorrectly, when he attempts to speak of chymistry. Mr. Rouelle's friends will know him again by these expressions; they will know him again still better when we add, that at the time he said this, and before he had done, he sat down and got up again five or six times, and that his chair was removed out of its place so many times.

However, Mr. Rouelle was a man of taste. In you, sir, he could distinguish the poet from the chymist; altho' he did not admire you in the latter character, yet he loved you in the former. You conclude by saying to us,

TEXT. "If Mr. Rouelle is angry with me; if you are angry, I am sorry for it, both on your account and his; but I do not think him so passionate a man as you say."

COMMENT. *If Mr. Rouelle is angry with me, &c.* He was sometimes angry with your chymistry, sir, but he was not angry with you; and the style in which we answer you, is not an angry tone; therefore you need not *be sorry*.

*I do not think him so passionate, &c.* Alas, sir, Mr. Rouelle is dead, this is the only subject of our sorrows! Let his ashes rest in peace, and let us cast nothing but flowers on his grave.

We shall only observe that our letters appeared before his death, and we have not heard that he disliked them.

We shall now sum up in a few words what we have said of your chymistry.

You had asserted, without limitation, that the utmost efforts of chymistry could not reduce gold into potable powder. Since the publication of our letters, you perceived your mistake; nothing was easier than to confess it. Next to the glory of never falling into an error, the highest degree of honour in a good man is to confess his error.

Instead of making this noble confession, you have chosen to maintain a falsehood; and in order to vin-



dedicate your former opinion, you have altered its nature; you have added words to it which were not in it; you have changed the state of the question; you make us say what we have not said, &c. Truly, sir, this manner of defence will not appear very convincing.

This is not all; you quarrel with us about our gold reduced into potable powder. In vain have we quoted Stahl, Senac, le Fevre, the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, and all the chymists; you will allow no other potable gold but that of mountebanks. Were we wrong when we said with Mr. Rouelle, that chymistry was not your talent?

No, sir, it is not, confess it. You went into the laboratories of the chymists to look for weapons, and you lost your way among the crucibles and chymical vessels.

## T W E N T I E T H   E X T R A C T .

*Of certain arts and sciences. Sequel. Of writing engraved on stone. Of the Presbyterians, of Fairfax and Cromwell; and of the Village of Naseby, &c. &c. Examination of an article taken out of the Questions sur l'Encyclopedie.*

§ 1. *Of writing engraved on stone.*

You return again to this subject, sir, unexpectedly. This is at least the twelfth time that you have spoke of it; perhaps it may be the last. Let us see then, for the last time, what you have to say on it. You address us in these polite words.

TEXT. "You are as bad judges of writing as of metal." (Quest. Encyclop. Art. Fonte.)

COMMENT. Might we not answer you, that you are as good a judge of writing as of metal?

TEXT. "It had been said that the ancients wrote on nothing but stone, brick, and wood."

COMMENT. You have said sometimes that they wrote on nothing but stone; sometimes that they wrote on stone and on metal; sometimes that they



wrote on stone, brick and wood. Prithee, sir, be so good as to tell us, once for all, what is really your hypothesis.

TEXT. "You forget the wood, and you make many weak objections to stone."

COMMENT. *We forget wood!* So far from forgetting it, that we have mentioned it eight times, and have implied it so many times by &c. in one letter. How often must a person mention a thing, to shew you that it is not forgotten?

As to our difficulties with regard to stone, we did expect that you would not find them *very good*. But behold, sir, the difference of tastes! Many people of some learning have not found them *weak*.

And if they are weak why do you not answer them? This would make it an easier task. But it seems you will not do it. They are not worth the trouble! We understand you!

TEXT. "But above all you forget that Deuteronomy was written on mortar."

COMMENT. We do not forget, that in the note which we were answering, there was no mention at all of Deuteronomy's being written on mortar. You had not yet made this curious and learned observation. Could we foresee that you would one day make it? Therefore you charge us with not having answered a difficulty which (1) you did not propose,

TEXT. "There is a little mistake here, and pardon me for saying it, a little dishonesty."

COMMENT. There is certainly a little of both; but it is easy to see on which side it lies.

§ 2. *Of the Presbyterians, of Fairfax, Cromwell, &c. &c.*

What shall we say, sir, of the Presbyterians, of Fairfax, and Cromwell, &c. Of their victory, and of the village of Naseby, where they found above six hundred and sixty thousand sheep, seventy-two thousand oxen, thirty-two thousand little girls,

(1) *You did not propose.* We have since answered it, see page 486.



which were not all little girls ! Shall we answer here this ingenious and sharp allusion ?

No ! When you shall have proved and clearly proved, that these six hundred thousand sheep were found in a village ; that six hundred and sixty thousand sheep could not subsist in a country eight leagues square, and that the inhabitants were not permitted to graze their cattle in the neighbouring deserts ; but especially when you have proved that a man may say of a country, of which he knows not the limits, that it is but eight leagues square ; and that this country of eight leagues square, bounded by a rivulet on the south, extends to the south, beyond that rivulet fifty leagues. When I say all these things are proved, which no doubt will be very easy, we shall endeavour to answer you.

We had already dwelt perhaps too much on this subject ; we shall not touch it again ; and we are sorry to perceive, that contrary to our intention, our reflexions have chagrined you. You tell us with sincerity,

TEXT. “ You are so much attached to the English Presbyterians, that you push party spirit so far, as to be angry with sensible people, who think these accounts a little exaggerated, and suspect some errors in the copier.”

COMMENT. *You are so attached to the Presbyterians, &c.* And you who are so tolerant, sir, so humane, so gentle ; why do you shew so much hatred and antipathy against the Presbyterians !

*So far as to be angry.* We were not angry ; we spoke in the most gentle and moderate manner possible. You are the only man, sir, that has found passion and party spirit in our letters.

*Who suspect some errors in the copier.* We readily acknowledge the faults of copiers, as has appeared, when they are proved ; but we do not see that you have clearly shewn the necessity of admitting any in the passage before us.



§ 3. *Judgment passed on our letters by the illustrious writer.*

Our letters, sir, have not had the happiness of pleasing you. In vain have we assumed the gentlest style; in vain have we tempered every where the mildest criticism with the most flattering encomiums! You have pronounced them *impudent, uncivil, adapted only to criticks without taste.*

Such as these letters are however, you do not think us able to have wrote them. Whether in joke or earnest, you suppose that some one has held the pen for us; and you grow angry with this our writer, and say hastily,

TEXT. "I shall never request him to be my secretary."

COMMENT. Truly, sir, this is a great punishment! But upon the whole, you had better not request this favour from him; as he loves truth, and you hate contradiction, it would be hard for you to agree well together.

TEXT. "For he makes his masters speak like very ignorant men."

COMMENT. Altho' you are not satisfied, sir, with the manner in which he makes us speak, yet we think that we have no reason to complain of it; it appears that our letters have not met with some success. Some of the learned who love you, and whose approbation is therefore more precious to us, have not scrupled to say that the Jewish authors are not deficient in wit or learning; that good observations may be found in them, and (1) researches into antiquity, &c. And others have found in them, (what flatters us much more) not only (2) moderation, but civility and politeness. By what fatality has it happened, sir, that you have seen in them precisely the contrary?

(1) *Researches, &c.* See the *Mercure & le Journal Encyclopedique* année 1769, *Aut.*

(2) *Moderation.* See le *Mercure*, les *Journaux des beaux Arts*, de *Verdun*, des *Savans*, the *Monthly Review*, &c. *Aut.*



TEXT. "If I was not the most tolerant of men, I would tell you that you are the most impudent and uncivil men in the world."

COMMENT. *O the most tolerant of men!* Your toleration is well known, it displays itself in every page of your works.

*I would tell you, &c.* You have said so many obliging things to so many civil christians, perhaps you are tempted to say something very tender to a parcel of poor Jews.

*The most impudent men.* Truly, to have dared to tell Mr. Voltaire, that he was a little mistaken with regard to the Madianites and their country, &c. &c. this was a very impudent thing; and to prove it too, was a very uncivil thing!

But knowingly to impute absurdities to one's adversaries, which they never said to talk of them as of people hurried on by the spirit of party, as most ignorant passionate people, this is the very summit of civility!

TEXT. "You forget in what age you are writing. Your trifling satire will be disregarded by genteel people of some learning."

COMMENT. We have answered your trifling criticisms, without any trifling satire; nothing is more distant from our views and character than satire.

*Genteel people of some learning* have, you know, honoured our letters with their approbation; and you probably had not a very low opinion of them, since you deigned to answer them.

*We forget in what age we write!* And do you not forget it yourself more than any body, you, who, in the eighteenth century, would make your contemporaries believe, that in Moses's time, the records of the cities of Phenicia, the accounts of their merchants, the books of their writers, &c. those of Sanchoniatho, of Job, of Thaut, &c. were written on stone, probably for the convenience of the readers, and the facility of carriage? You, who believe yourself an artist, and who pretend that amongst all



the founders and goldsmiths of the eighteenth century, there is not one who can without the help of a miracle, cast a golden calf coarsely executed, in less than six months; you who in order to prove it, state the processes which are used when masterpieces are cast, such as the statues in public places; and who believe your cotemporaries weak enough to be taken in by this vain parade? You who set up for a chymist, and in 1771, know no other potable gold but that of mountebanks; who, in 1771, so many years after Stahl, know not, or would wish to conceal from your readers, that chymical process which he discovered, and which no chymist or learner in chymistry is ignorant of? You who say, and repeat a thousand times in 1771, that the Jews offered human victims to God; that their law commanded these detestable sacrifices; that they were a nation of cannibals; and that their prophets promised them as a feast, that they should eat the flesh of horse and of man? &c.

If you are writing all these fine things, sir, for the age you live in, what an idea must you have of it!

Probably you said to yourself, when you took up the pen, what a (1) celebrated writer did not say, altho' you charge him with it, "My cotemporaries  
 " are ignorant foolish people, my reputation and my  
 " decisive tone will awe them; they are trifling,  
 " light, unthinking people, who take bons mots for  
 " arguments, and flourishes for proofs; I will make  
 " them laugh and they will believe me." This undoubtedly was the class of readers, whom you thought your answer would suit. For them was calculated that ingenious, elegant, agreeable play of words, which you discharge against (2) a periodical

(1) *A celebrated writer.* See *Evangile du jour*. These very words nearly are put into the learned Abbé Fleuri's mouth, a writer as respectable for his sincerity as for his wise and sound philosophy. They make him lay it down as a principle, that his countrymen are fools, who can bear any thing to be said to them. *Aut.*

(2) *A periodical writer.* The insult offered to the author of *Année littéraire* on our account, causes an increase of our gratitude towards him, and to-



writer, who has deigned to give a favourable account of our letters, as if he was the only one who spoke well of them; therefore you do not know that out of all your periodical writers, there is not one who has not spoke favourably of them. Really, one would think that you read nothing but *l'Année littéraire*, not a passage of it escapes you! You treat this journal as you do the Jews; you profess the highest contempt for it every where, and yet you are continually returning to it. People do not generally speak so much of what they despise.

We have not the honour of knowing the author of *l'Année littéraire*, but we read his works, sir, as you do; and we will loudly affirm, that a man like him, who has contended for so many years against the double torrent of impiety and false taste, is an useful member of society.

§ 6. *A piece of advice given and returned.*

You conclude, sir, by giving us a piece of advice, which we will take the liberty of returning to you.

TEXT. "Believe me, lay aside your ancient commentators, and don't insult Christians."

COMMENT. *Lay aside your ancient commentators.* Why lay them aside, if they may be useful?

*Don't insult Christians.* You suddenly take up the Christian cause with great warmth! Indeed, sir, you may be answered without insulting Christians, or even a single Christian. It is not insulting a writer, modestly and respectfully to point out his mistakes.

*Don't insult Christians.* This is good advice; but to whom are you giving it? To Jews, who are continually employed in clearing the scriptures, on which the faith of Christians is built, from your invectives? Give this advice, sir, to the author des Homilies sur l'ancien & le Nouveau Testament, to the author des Questions de Zapata, to the author du Diner du Comte de Boulainvilliers, to the author of

wards all those periodical writers, who have given a favourable account of our letters. We plainly see the danger they run, who speak freely of those writings in which Mr. Voltaire and his works are mentioned. *ut.*



the Philosophical Dictionary, of the Epistle to the Romans, of l'Evangile du jour, to these writers you should give in charge not to insult Christians.

*Don't insult Christians.* What fund for a large and bitter comment, would these words and (1) these writings supply us with, if we were malicious! But here we stop; do you judge whether we love satire.

*Believe me, lay aside, &c.* Believe us, sir, lay aside your chymistry, (we told you so before,) and the art of casting metals, and the art of writing on stone. But above all, lay aside the Hebrews, their language, their laws, their history, &c. or when you speak of them hereafter, do it with more exactness and impartiality.

## C O N C L U S I O N.

What has been our object, sir, in all these observations? Was it to humble Mr. Voltaire, and to enjoy an insolent triumph over a great man? Far be from us such thoughts! We have been attacked and abused in our patriarchs, our kings, and prophets, our laws and manners, &c. and we thought that we might justly defend ourselves; that we might instruct those who are dazzled with your style and sallies of wit; that we might convince them, chiefly in this case of the Jews, that they must examine before they believe; that altho' you are a great man and a great philosopher, yet you have your absences of mind, your prejudices and errors; that your quotations are sometimes false, your translations unfaithful, your assertions rash, your decisions unfair; in short, that he who would rest his faith on your word, or take you for a sure and infallible guide, as many credulous readers have done, would necessarily expose himself to many mistakes.

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(1) *These writings.* In these Christians are expressly called fanaticks, persecutors, rogues, dupes, impostors; they are told that they and their gospel are liars, that they have told lies, ridiculous lies with their miracles. *Edit.*



Upon the whole, sir, we think it our duty to make this publick declaration before we conclude; the multitude of mistakes, contradictions, and bad arguments, which we have pointed out in your writings, and so many more which might be pointed out, shall never diminish our esteem for your personal qualities, or our admiration for your talents. Notwithstanding the bitterness of your answer and the sharpness of our reply; these shall never take any thing from the sincerity of our encomiums, or the fervour of our good wishes for your welfare.

We affirm it with satisfaction; no writer of this age has run so splendid a career as you have done. Enjoy the glory you have acquired; rule over the empire of letters by your talents, and over the country you inhabit by your benevolence. Let your estate continue to be an asylum to the (1) unfortunate; there cherish (2) discontented industry, encourage population, give life (3) to agriculture. Let French vessels (4) sail freely on the lake, and be indebted for this to your cares and fortune. Raise statues to your king, and temples to your God. And since thro' a blessing, which few writers have experienced, the icy hand of age has not yet extinguished the fire of genius, consecrate your last labours to an useful and honourable purpose, to that of overturning the pernicious and foolish (5) systems

(1) *The unfortunate.* Mademoiselle Corneille, the Calafes, Sirven, and many others.

(2) *Discontented industry.* Several artificers of Geneva were received by Mr. Voltaire and set up on his credit.

(3) *To agriculture.* See the illustrious writer's letters to the bishop of Anagni, Mr. Voltaire has been charged with making too great a parade of his acts of beneficence and generosity. This is an unfair charge. A great man who has enemies, has a right to publish the good which he does. Happy that age in which all the rich will do good and will tell it too! *Aut.*

(4) *Sail freely on the lake.* The first French frigate that was seen on the lake of Geneva was seized for debt. Mr. Voltaire gave thirty thousand livres to clear it. See les Ephemerides du Citoyen. *Aut.*

(5) *Systems of your sophists.* Altho' Mr. Voltaire who has confuted the *System of nature*, (*Questions Encyclopediques*), invites people to read it, (*Questions Encyclopediques*), we have not read it, and we do not repent it. Some learned Christians assure us, that it is a work both absurd and tiresome, in which the author, wandering in the mists of his vain metaphysics, is perpe-



of your sophists; despise their secret murmurs, and endeavour to wipe off that shameful stain which they have cast on philosophy. Establish in opposition to these bold writers, the existence of a God, his justice, his providence, &c. these truths which are engraved on every heart, which are dear to every nation, (1) the only solid basis of civil society, which with sacrilegious impudence they endeavour to overturn. Teach citizens to obey the laws, give to legislators lessons of humanity, and to sovereigns precepts of wise toleration. But whilst you are preaching up toleration, exclude not men from it, who worship the same God you do, who are your brethren by nature, your fathers in the faith, a people who deserve to be pitied on account of their misfortunes, and if we dare say it, to be respected on account of their antiquity, religion and laws.

We are, and always shall be, with the highest esteem, and the most profound respect,

Sir,

your most obedient humble servants,

From the environs  
of Utrecht,  
1st Nov. 1771.

Joseph Ben Jonathan,  
Aaron Mathatai,  
David Wincker.

## F I N I S.

tually contradicting himself. And yet learned men have extolled this work, people of all stations have read it with avidity. Even women have dipt into it! O France! What age! What taste!

However the infatuation of the publick has been but short. *This work* Mr. Voltaire says very justly, *is fallen of itself*. This is a convincing proof, that its transient success was rather owing to the intrigues of party, than to its pretended graces of style. Therefore it could not reflect shame either on the age or the nation. Disgrace could fall only on the author, and on the wretched party that supported him. And even among this small flock, no one owns the birth. They are all ashamed of it. *Christ.*

(1) *The only solid basis of civil society*. On this basis the Roman orator founded his commonwealth and his laws. "Let our citizens, says he, begin by firmly believing that there are gods, masters of all, who govern all . . . whose looks discover what every one is, and what he does." *Sit igitur jam hoc a principio persuasum civibus dominos esse omnium rerum & moderatores Deos. . . . Et qualis quisque sit, quid agat, qui diu se admittat, intueri.* This was the opinion of Socrates, Plato, Zaleucus, and of all the ancient legislators. What a difference between these great men and our little giants! *Aut.*



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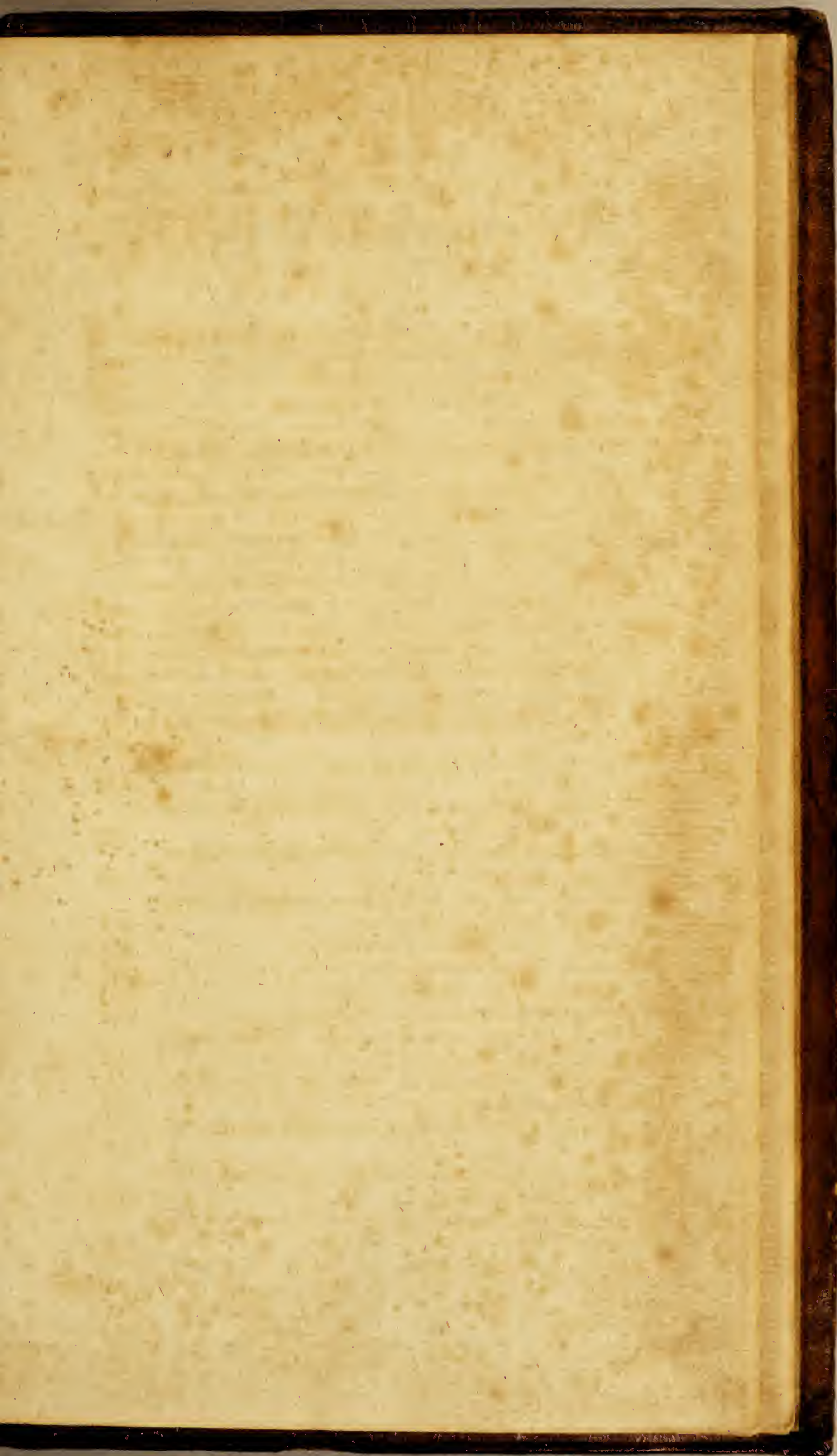
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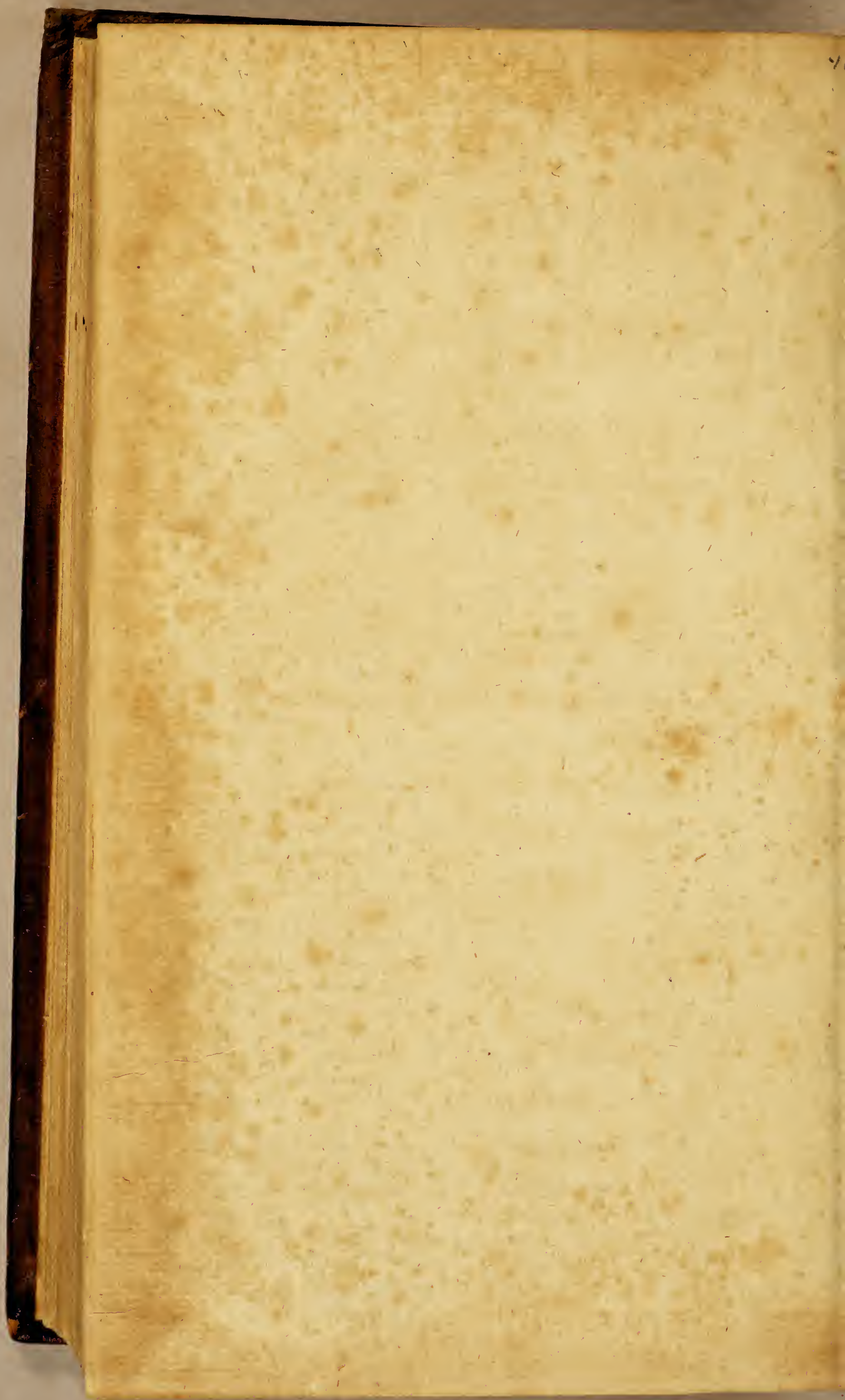
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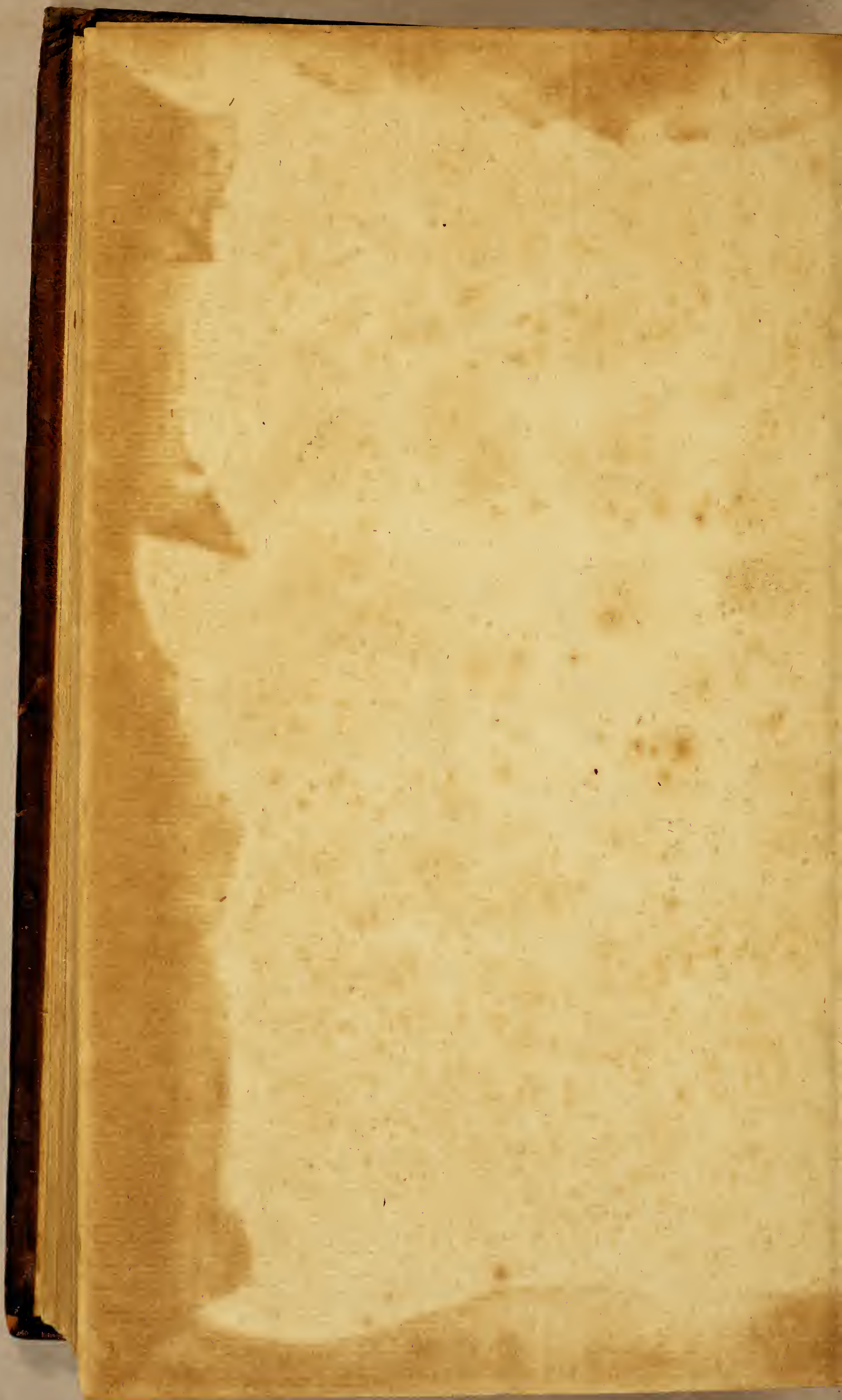














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